

**‘We follow our cow...and forget our  
home’: Movement, survival, and  
Fulani identity in Greater Accra,  
Ghana.**

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## Abstract of Thesis

'We follow our cow and forget our home'. This statement encapsulates the problems that this thesis addresses in relation to the three interdependent themes of identity, movement and survival. This study is concerned with Fulani identities and mobility in Greater Accra, Ghana. It is ultimately about Fulani survival across space and through time. It involves an understanding of where people are coming from, where they have travelled to and the environments in which they have grown up, been educated, married, borne children and worked.

The units of analysis are the lives, stories and experiences of individuals, as well as the communities and ultimately ethnic group of which they form a part. The account thus addresses the 'personal troubles' of individual women and men, both young and old, as well as wider 'public issues' taken up by the Ghanaian state and press. These issues are also observed to be the subject of debate and concern in the Fulani community in Greater Accra.

This thesis concerns itself with the sites and circumstances in which Fulani consider themselves to be the same or different. The markers of Fulani identity, as recognized by Fulani and non-Fulani alike, are examined. The factors are investigated that allow them, as a distinct ethnic category, to maintain and perpetuate this identity and viability in Greater Accra.

The analogy of 'construction sites' is useful for considering these different, explicit and implicit events and recurring processes, through which people reproduce themselves as Fulani (of various kinds). These sites are locations as well as contexts of action. They are social circumstances (with personnel, power relations, procedures etc.) such as ethnic associations, public gatherings and common rites of passage. The recurring processes include genealogical reckoning of kinship and endogamous marriage transactions, and the ways in which ties of descent and filiation are used to enhance individual survival and family development goals.

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## Acknowledgements

A few months into my fieldwork, after an especially long and complicated interview in a remote rural spot, the old man with whom I had been speaking, said to me ‘And how is *your* father, Professor Oppong?’ I was astonished. I had spent more than four hours inquiring about this man’s family, completely unaware that from the outset he already knew about me and mine! Thirty years ago, my father, a veterinarian used to treat cattle on the Accra Plains and also conducted fieldwork for his own PhD thesis on cattle skin diseases in Greater Accra. This involved working closely with Fulani herdsman, among whom he earned a considerable reputation. The man I interviewed had worked with and known my father.

Now, three decades later, it became apparent to me that the welcome that I received and the trust invested in me by members of the Fulani community was based upon the fact that some people knew *my* own family and fragments of *my* life-story. There seemed no greater guarantee of assistance than being introduced as ‘Professor Oppong’s daughter!’ (*bii Doctor Oppong!*) So Papa *medaase*! Ma and Pa, you inspired and encouraged me and made this thesis possible.

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Some people wanted their names to be known, others wanted to remain anonymous. I have changed the names of people and places in some instances and hope that I have done justice to their wishes.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

### **Movement, identity & survival**

This study is concerned with Fulani identities and mobility in Greater Accra, Ghana. It is ultimately concerned with Fulani survival across space and through time. It involves an understanding of where people are coming from, where they have travelled to and the environments in which they have grown up, been educated, married, borne children and worked. The units of analysis are the lives, stories and experiences of individuals, as well as the communities and ultimately ethnic group of which they form a part.<sup>1</sup> The account thus addresses the 'personal troubles' of individual women and men, both young and old, as well as wider 'public issues' taken up by the Ghanaian state and press (Wright Mills 1959: 8). These issues are also observed to be the subject of debate and concern in the Fulani community in Greater Accra.

Many of the questions raised in this thesis are addressed and graphically illustrated in the following vignettes. The first sketch, of a street parade, is an illustration of the ways in which the politics of Fulani identity is explicitly mobilized at the community level in Greater Accra. The second, the story of Shuhaibu Abdul-Hairu and his journey to Ghana, represents an individual's mobility over time.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1, A note on field methods

### *A Fulani<sup>2</sup> street procession in Accra*

On the 8 January 1997, the end of the Muslim fasting period of Ramadan was celebrated by the Muslim peoples of Nima, Accra, with a procession through the main street.<sup>3</sup> There were over a dozen different associations taking part in the parade, many of them had formed on the basis of ethnic group affiliation. The Fulani procession was organized by the Great Fulani Association, a *suudu-baaba* that was known throughout the Fulani community in Greater Accra.<sup>4</sup> This particular organization was established by Ghanaian born Fulani.

The women in the Fulani procession had their hair intricately plaited and were carrying large calabashes of fresh milk on their heads. The men were dressed as herdsmen. The costumes they were wearing, traditional Nigerian Fulani dress, had been chosen by elder members of the association.

'...You see, the Mali[an] dress is different. The Burkina ones are also different, Niger also has different traditional dress. This year it was the Nigerian Fulani dress that we chose. Last year we used the Burkina Fulani dress. God willing next year we will choose a different dress, maybe we will choose Cameroon or Mali, or Gambia or other countries...' (Mohammed Toure, Chairman of the Great Fulani Association).

The banner carried at the front of the procession read: 'SOUDOU BABA GREAT FULANI ASSOCIATION'<sup>5</sup> (see photograph in Chapter Six). On the left hand side of the banner was painted a picture of a woman in a rural setting, behind her a house made of earth and several trees. She carried a calabash on her head. On the right hand side was painted a herdsman with a straw hat on his head and a long stick over his shoulder. He was following his cow.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Fulani' is a Hausa term and is primarily used in Nigeria and Ghana and by extension in the anglophone literature in general. The term 'Peuls' is widely used by the French, as it is the name given to them by the Wolof of Senegal. In the Gambia however, they are known by the Bambara term 'Fula'. The Kanuri and other peoples of the Chad Basin call them 'Felaata'. 'The name Fellata derives from Pulatu, the Kanuri name for Fulbe. In fact, the Fellata consist of Hausa, Fulbe, Kanuri and other peoples from West Africa' (Hino 1993: 73). In German works they are termed 'Fulbe'. This, with it's singular 'Pullo' is their own term for themselves (Stenning 1959:2). The term Fulani however is the preferred appellation in this particular study as it is used in the Ghanaian context, by the Fulani themselves, their neighbours from other language groups and the English social science literature. However in circumstances where other terms were used by informants these will be mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> This is a major Muslim Festival and the Government had, for the first time, made it a Public Holiday.

<sup>4</sup> *Suudu-baabas* are Fulani ethnic associations. See Chapter Six.

<sup>5</sup> The most widely accepted spelling is in fact *Suudu-baaba*. This is the spelling I will use throughout.

Inherent in the decision to choose a Fulani costume from one of various West African countries was the acknowledgement that there is no Ghanaian Fulani dress and that the way Fulani dress and present themselves varies enormously from country to country. In other words, Fulani may be *in* Ghana but they are not *of* Ghana in the sense that they have no traditions and way of dressing unique to them.

The diversity of Fulani experience was also being displayed and celebrated. The symbolism was stark and simple, that of a woman with her calabash of milk and a man following his cow. Despite the fact that this was a Nigerian Fulani look, the message on the banner was a universal one, speaking to and of Fulani from all over West Africa. In fact the banner of the previous year also showed a herdsman and his cow (see photograph in Chapter Six). No doubt that of next year will be similar.

Many people on the streets of Nima that afternoon would not have been able to read the message on the banner. However most would surely have recognized the symbolism, that of a cow and a herder, as being representative of the Fulani.

'The ladies and young men, we made them one dress so that when you saw them you would know that it was the Fulani who were coming. Did you see us drinking milk in the streets?...now we know that we have gone home, we are in Ghana but we remember our home' (Mohammed Toure, Chairman of the Great Fulani Association).

A car formed part of the procession. Those who could get close enough to it, in the crush and heat of the day, would have seen it contained four old men. These men were in fact chiefs, Fulani chiefs of Accra. These four chiefs represented Fulani from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Draped across the bonnet of the car was another banner, it read 'Unity' (see photograph in Chapter Six).

Abdulrahman, the Vice-President of the *suudu-baaba* which organized the Fulani parade, said of his organization, 'ours is a united body...we box together, our aim is to unite'. Here, he was alluding to the fact that many Fulani Associations in Accra are organized on the basis of nationality, each country having its own *suudu-baaba* and its own meetings and agenda: 'Burkina and Mali can't come together and have a meeting, Burkina does its separate, Mali separate'. (Abdulrahman)

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This public celebration of Fulani identity on the streets of Accra illustrates the many identities of the Fulani. Here, in this very public arena, were members of the Fulani community (many of whom were, as the Vice President put it in a common phrase, 'made-in-Ghana') celebrating the diversity of Fulani experience in West Africa on the one hand and on the other proclaiming that they were 'unified' and 'one' in Ghana.

*Street parade*



Here were the Fulani processing alongside the Wangara, Kado, Zabarama, Hausa, the Niger Youth Association, groups who were muslim but were not of Ghanaian origin, as well as Northern Ghanaian ethnic groups such as the Dagomba. Their relationship with other muslim, 'northern', peoples was being expressed and celebrated. The street parade made visual many of the pertinent issues and problems involved in a discussion of Fulani identity, not least their geographical spread and attempts to foster unity among people of diverse origins.

### **'Following cows...'**

The statement, 'We follow our cow...and forget our home,' was made by Mohammed Toure, the then Chairman of a *suudu-baaba* in Accra. Here is a typical story of a man who literally followed his cows...

### ***Following cows...***

Shuhaibu Abdul-Hairu was born in Mali where he spent his childhood and his youth herding cattle. In 1997 he was sixty-seven years old. At the age of twenty-six, he decided to leave home. Shuhaibu got a contract to herd seventy cows, along with two other herders from Mali, to Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The herders made the journey on foot and took twenty-five days to reach Kumasi.

The various owners of the cattle made the same journey by vehicle and joined the herders in Kumasi. There they sold the cows. Shuhaibu was paid nine pounds by the cattle owners, for the entire journey. From Kumasi, Shuhaibu got transport to Accra. Since coming to Ghana, he has relocated over seventeen times within Greater Accra and the Volta Region, working as a hired herder and selling cow's milk. He has spent from less than one month to several years in each of the various locations.

Although the cows that Shuhaibu followed were not his own, they have led him to establish a new home in Ghana. This story is rather typical of many others as is the route taken.<sup>6</sup>

*6. As we shall see throughout the thesis.*

*A herdsman*



## Fulani in West Africa & Ghana

Many previous studies (anthropological, historical, geographical) have concerned themselves with different Fulani communities in diverse locations in West Africa and beyond.<sup>7</sup> These studies have been carried out at various periods of time. None however has so far been conducted in Greater Accra.<sup>8</sup> This work is therefore distinctive in time and location in the field of Fulani studies.

The Fulani are one of West Africa's most populous ethnic groups. From the Atlantic Coast to the Red Sea, Fulani peoples live in a more or less continuous zone, corresponding mainly to the climatic and vegetational zone of the Sahel. Although indigenous to many of the states of this region, they invariably form a minority of the population in the states in which they are found. At a more local level they may form a majority, as in Northern Nigeria. The main Fulani populations are to be found in the Futa Toro and Futa Djallon regions of Senegal and Guinea respectively, in the Macina region of Mali and in a more or less continuous band stretching eastwards through Niger, northern Nigeria and Cameroon .

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<sup>7</sup> There is large body of literature on the Fulani. See for example Seydou's 1977 general bibliography of the Fulani literature. Some of the works that have informed this present study are (as we shall see), by country: BENIN, Bierschenk 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997; Bierschenk et al. 1991, 1997; Boesen 1994; Hardung 1997; Jung 1997; Kuhn 1997; Welte 1997; BURKINA FASO, Benoit 1978, 1979; Diallo 1997; Finnegan & Delgado 1980; Hagberg 1998; Riesman 1974, 1977; Sowers 1986; CAMEROON, Bocquene 1980, 1986; Boutrais 1986; Burnham 1975, 1980b, 1991, 1996; Carter 1967, Davis 1995, Gondolo 1986, Jeffreys 1966, Schultz 1993, VerBecke 1988; CÔTE d'IVOIRE, Bassett 1994; Bernardet 1984, 1989, 1994; GUINEA, Camara et al. 1986; MALI, Bâ 1956, 1966, 1980a, 1980b; Bâ & Daget 1962; De Bruijn 1997, 1998; De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; NIGER Bonfiglioli 1988; Beckwith 1983; Dupire 1962a, 1962c, 1971, 1975; SIERRA LEONE, Bah 1983; SUDAN, Adamu 1986, Delmet 1994; NIGERIA, Abba et al. 1991; Abdulkadir 1975; Abubakar 1991; Adebayo 1997; Awogbade 1983 a, b; 1986, 1991; Blench 1994; Bovin 1985; De St. Croix 1972; Ekwensi 1962; Gefu 1992; Hopfen 1958; Johnston 1967; Nicholas 1980; Sa'idu 1989; Seydou 1977; Stenning 1957, 1958, 1959, 1965, 1966; DIVERSE STATES, Adamu & Kirke-Greene (eds.) 1986; Ayisi 1980; Azarya 1978, 1997; Boesen 1997; Botte & Schmitz 1994; Bovin 1990a, 1990b; Dupire 1970; Eguchi et al. 1993; Frantz 1981; Hino 1993; N'gaide 1997; Riesman 1971, 1975, 1980, 1984, 1990a, 1992; Santoir 1990, 1993; Schmitz 1986, 1994; Schultz 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in the Region of Greater Accra. Accra refers to the metropolitan area only.



Although it remains useful to differentiate major categories of Fulani on the basis of their livelihoods, this can also be misleading. For despite being considered one of the major cattle keeping peoples of the world (Riesman 1984: 171), and certainly West Africa's most thoroughly pastoral ethnic group, not all Fulani engage in cattle herding. Of those who are pastoralists, some are nomadic and others semi-sedentary. The remaining Fulani are involved in a multitude of other economic activities and are usually settled.

None of these categories however is unchanging. In the course of their lives, individuals can and do find themselves shifting from one to another. As Riesman (1984: 172) has noted, nomadic and semi-sedentary pastoralists frequently shift back and forth from one to the other variant of the cattle-herding life. But, he asserted, once Fulani have given up cattle raising for some other occupation they rarely go back to it again. Burnham however cautioned against such a statement. In his view shifts between pastoralism and cultivation do not operate in one direction only. He cited Dupire (1972: 52-6) who recorded several cases of Fulani groups who had successfully re-adopted pastoralism in Niger and Nigeria. He had himself observed the same phenomenon in Cameroon (Burnham 1980: 163).

The Savanna - Sahel region, from where the majority of Fulani people hail, is one of the most unstable and harsh environments in the world. The climate is uncertain, the vegetation is sparse (and is being continuously degraded) and the land use is under stress. The inhabitants of the Sahel have to be adaptive, and malleable, prepared to face and counter the environmental and man-made disasters that periodically befall them, if they are to survive.<sup>9</sup> The region exhibits a variety of climatic zones and ecological niches. As Burnham (1980: 147) cautioned, in relation to the drought and famines in the Sahel in the 1970s to 1980s, not all of this region is subject to such great climatic and social stress. Indeed, as he noted, the West African Savanna region displays substantial environmental diversity. More than a third of it is well watered.

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<sup>9</sup> For discussion of survival strategies see, Scott 1984; Bonfiglioli 1991; Bovin 1990a, 1990b; De Bruijn, Van Dijk 1995, 1995.

Despite having a long history of residence in Ghana (Hilton 1962),<sup>10</sup> and despite being relatively settled and spread out throughout the country (Hill 1970a: 44), the Fulani in general are considered as 'aliens'<sup>11</sup> legally (in the eyes of the state) and 'strangers' locally (by the various 'indigenous' ethnic groups among whom they reside).<sup>12</sup> This is irrespective of their length of stay in the country (Tonah 1993: 127), and irrespective of the fact that some consider themselves indigenous to Ghana, while others have legally naturalized as Ghanaians. Their status in Ghana is that of an 'ethnic minority'. Their name is essentially tied, in popular stereotype, to cattle rearing.

In Ghana, to a greater degree than in most other West African States (where they are often, though not always, indigenous and considered local) there are many differences between all the peoples who call themselves (and are called by others) Fulani. The Fulani community in Ghana can be seen as a patchwork of representatives from most other parts of the 'Fulani world', an amalgam of peoples, who form part of the larger Fulani diaspora. For Fulani in Ghana hail from many different countries of origin and speak different dialects of Fulfulde (as well as many other West African languages). Subtle differences in dress and language (often linked to a particular place or region) can also be distinguished by certain Fulani in the Greater Accra context.

One factor that differentiates these Fulani in Ghana from others in the region is their 'power', or rather, their relative lack of such (as compared with the Fulani in Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon, for example). This can partly be explained in relation to their standing as 'aliens' and is partly due to their diverse origins. Although highly internally differentiated as an ethnic group, they still maintain their

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<sup>10</sup> See Arhin 1979:3 for a brief discussion on the presence of Fulani in Salaga, Northern Ghana, in the early nineteenth century.

<sup>11</sup> In 1971 Ofose-Amaah reviewed the position of Aliens in Ghana. This review is still pertinent to the situation in Ghana today.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix II. The extent to which Fulani are treated as 'other' than Ghanaian by the media is well illustrated in these newspaper stories. See also Asmah 1988.



distinctiveness vis-à-vis other 'local' Ghanaian and immigrant ethnic groups and are a distinctive category of people.<sup>13</sup>

Greater Accra has long been the receiving and sending area for a variety of different peoples. It has for many centuries received 'traders' and 'strangers' from the northern savanna areas, as well as seafarers from the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>14</sup> The area is therefore very multi-ethnic in composition. Issues of ethnicity and identity are particularly salient, indeed increasingly so at the present time. Particular to Ghana are a distinct group of Fulani, those born locally. But Ghanaian Fulani are not part of the literature, which claims to represent the 'Fulani world'.

In Ghana, there are differences and tensions between all the various peoples who call themselves Fulani. Different individuals express these in different ways in a variety of circumstances. However, similarities must also exist, in order for the label Fulani to be relevant for the various peoples it encompasses. There also exists on some levels a strong sense of unity and sameness vis-à-vis the 'locals'. This is borne out by the continued existence of the Fulani as a distinct group in Greater Accra and their high degree of 'non-incorporation' and continued exclusiveness in Greater Accra.<sup>15</sup>

Given the mobile nature of the lives of some of these individuals, identifying their exact town, village or rural hamlet of origin would be a difficult task.<sup>16</sup> Individuals move within countries and regions, but their country of origin remains

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<sup>13</sup> The extent to which they can be considered a group, able to take action and persisting over time, as opposed to a category, with particular identifiable features, will be debated.

<sup>14</sup> There is a large body of literature on the migration, settlement, 'assimilation' and 'absorption' of non-Ghanaian African immigrants into Ghana in general and Accra in particular. See for example Addo 1967, 1968; Eades 1975, 1979, 1993; Grindal 1973; Hart 1969, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1987; Schildkrout 1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979; Skinner 1963; Stapleton 1959.

<sup>15</sup> We shall return to this idea of 'non-incorporation', with regards to Fulani marriage, at the beginning of Chapter Four.

<sup>16</sup> Pronunciations of place names differ making location of places problematic. The majority of the individuals interviewed were illiterate in roman script (though many could read Arabic) and could not be expected to understand maps, much less place their 'origins' on them.

constant, as does their clan affiliation. I therefore decided that country of origin (although masking many internal regional differences between Fulani groups) was sufficiently useful a marker of difference between Fulani groups in Greater Accra. However clan name was also used as a way of distinguishing between different Fulani populations. While clan name is not synonymous with country of origin, there is a marked correlation between clan and country of origin.

## **Resources of identity: Sameness and difference**

Ethnic identity is not only a basic characteristic of contemporary persons, it is also essential as an analytical device for the observer. As Fardon notes, in order to achieve comprehensibility both for the writer and reader, it is necessary to employ terminology, to designate collective agencies: 'Ethnic terms designate collective agencies that are brief and (presumably) correspond to (at least some) local versions' (Fardon 1996: 155).

The 'collective agencies' at issue in the context of this research are designated by the ethnic label 'Fulani' (used throughout this thesis). The term is not unproblematic. In using a single term to incorporate all the diverse peoples (given and accepting) the ethnic group label Fulani, there is a sense in which the term and the people are being reified. This reification of concepts is universal and understandable, nevertheless difficult to eradicate. People invariably essentialize their own identities. As regards ethnic groups, the temptation to conceive of them as, 'possessing certain fixed cultural and organizational characteristics,' is encouraged by both popular and folk assumptions the world over (Eriksen 1992 : 127-28).

The ethnic category 'Fulani' is generally recognized throughout Ghana, in general, and Greater Accra in particular. What it means to be Fulani, as with any other ethnic category, varies according to who is asking the question, who is asked and

under what circumstances (see Uchendu 1995: 131).<sup>17</sup> The stereotype of the Fulani ethnic category in Greater Accra can only be understood in relation to Fulani history in West Africa, as well as their pan-West African (and beyond) spatial distribution (see Chapter Two and Romanucci-Ross & De Vos 1995: 27). How their geography and history is recognized however, also varies enormously among Fulani, as well as between Fulani and non-Fulani.

Ethnicity therefore has to do with 'the classification' of people and of their group relationships (Eriksen 1997: 34). It is also related to, 'the ways in which people conceptualize and utilize symbols of cultural distinctiveness' (Schildkrout 1978: 3). It has to do with belonging and with context (social, geographical, temporal). As regards context, Ogawa (1993: 119) has pointed out that, 'in each area of West Africa where the different groups of Fulbe have settled, new ethnic identities are being formed'. A basic premise of this research is that the very existence and nature of so many 'differences' between and among all who are considered to be (and who consider themselves as) Fulani, attests to the fact that ethnic identity is not a, 'naturalized... God-given fact of nature rather...a socially constructed and historically mutable cultural phenomenon' (Burnham 1996: 5).

Schildkrout (1978: 10) provided a comprehensive and relevant discussion of ethnicity two decades ago, when considering a strangers' quarter or *zongo*, in Kumasi, Ghana. She highlighted the importance of contextualizing ethnicity and dealing with the concept across the generations and through time. She asserted that,

Ethnicity is a set of conscious or unconscious beliefs or assumptions about one's own or another's identity, as derived from membership in a particular type of group or category. These beliefs may affect social behaviour and may influence relationships and interaction in a number of social fields: economic, political,

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<sup>17</sup> 'Ethnic identification, even in the political frame of reference, can be segmentary in articulation. Nigerian students in London or New York are more likely to identify themselves as African than as Nigerian unless the situation clearly indicates that identification of country is expected or required. To another Nigerian, they are most likely to identify themselves with state or region; if they are speaking to a co-ethnic, they are likely to name the provincial or administrative headquarters to which they belong. Thus, identity is likely to change as the frame of reference changes' (Uchendu 1995: 131).

domestic or religious. Ethnic categories are frames of reference which affect people's perceptions of events, relationships, and other persons or groups. They have a descriptive content, stereotypes, and a normative content consisting of values and/or moral imperatives about behaviour.

(Schildkrout 1978: 3)

In this study Fulani beliefs about themselves as a group are sought from a variety of different positions, (individual and collective). Their views on their distinctiveness vis-à-vis other groups (mythical and actual) and the factors that give them shared group membership (common myths of origin, genealogical reckoning of kinship, moral and ethical ties, common racial/biological traits etc.) are explored.

As Romanucci-Ross & De Vos (1995: 32) have recently stressed, a substantial element of ethnic identity is located in the cultural traditions related to changes in the life cycle (marriage, divorce, death, illness, birth, coming of age). They noted that it is particularly in rites of passage that one finds highly emotional, symbolic reinforcement of ethnic patterns. Of particular relevance are the discussions and arguments surrounding the 'right way' (in people's descriptions, their stereotypes, and the values that they express) to organize and perform these traditions. These tensions are often apparent between the young and old, newly arrived migrants and settled Fulani in Ghana. They highlight ongoing debates of 'correct' or 'traditional' Fulani behaviour.

Social identities other than those based upon ethnicity are also important (Hagberg 1998: 18), such as those based on religious affiliation and locality. At a basic level, the concept of identity is being utilized here to explore issues of sameness and difference at both collective and individual levels of analysis. As Jenkins notes:

...the notion of identity simultaneously establishes two possible relations of comparison between persons or things: similarity, on the one hand, and difference on the other.

(Jenkins 1996: 3-4)

This thesis explores the contexts in which various actors strive to essentialize 'being Fulani' and the ways in which this is articulated. On the one hand, it could be posited that Fulani identity has some very recognizable, core, features, (Islam, cattle, *Pulaaku*, Fulfulde etc.). However, all these markers are fluid and have various degrees of relevance in the lives of different individuals. Often, it is attempts to essentialize Fulani 'sameness', particularly by Ghanaian born Fulani, that lead to the deconstruction of this identity and highlight differences.

Different categories of persons experience 'being Fulani' differently, women/men, young/old, immigrant/born-in-Ghana, urban/peri-urban/rural-dwellers. However, social contexts also reflect the degrees of fluidity and relevance of these markers (Islam etc.) for different individuals, as we shall see, particularly in Chapters Six (in relation to *suudu-baaba*) and Seven (on performance). Fulani (ethnic) identity may also have little or no significance to a person's social identity in some situations and contexts.

Identity cannot be discussed without addressing the effect of change. As with other 'types' of identity, social identity is 'never a final or settled matter' (Jenkins 1996: 40). The contextual, situational and relational character of identities is generally accepted (Hagberg 1998: 18). Individuals<sup>18</sup> go through age-related changes in their identities (social as well as biological). Collective identities also change irreversibly over time and through space. Meanwhile in some situations identities are negotiated and moderated (see Chapter Seven on performance).

The situation in Greater Accra is that collectively Fulani sometimes have difficulty acting together. This can partly be explained by such factors as their diverse

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<sup>18</sup> The distinction between a social and an individual identity is by no means clear-cut. Therefore, although I am making an analytical distinction between social and individual identities, they are interrelated. For 'both are intrinsically social' (Jenkins 1996: 18). Individual identities, although embodied, often require the presence of others (social interaction) to be constructed, thus giving them a collective identity. For example gender is an obvious aspect of individual identity, which is constructed in interactions with others (Jenkins 1996: 58).

national origins, their lack of local power and the dispersed nature of their settlement in Greater Accra. Individual Fulani identities are very complex and include not only diverse national origins but differences in gender, age, class, residence, education, livelihood and legal status in Ghana etc.

### **Explicit and implicit sites of construction**

As Cornell & Hartman (1998: 154) have stressed, '...identity construction may occur in any part of a society and as an aspect of virtually any set of social relations'. Since identity construction can occur 'anywhere', it is important to outline the locations and contexts of identity construction which have been privileged for current consideration. There are a number of specific sites when the issue of what it means to be Fulani in Greater Accra today comes explicitly and publicly to the fore. These include weddings, meetings of ethnic associations and street processions. Under other circumstances there are also situations in which Fulani identity is implicitly involved, such as religious ceremonies and education of the young .

The analogy of 'construction sites' is useful for considering these explicit and implicit events and recurring processes through which people reproduce themselves as Fulani. These sites are locations as well as contexts of action.

Each of these sites is an arena in which identity construction occurs. It is a place where social actors make claims, define one another, jockey for position, eliminate or initiate competition, exercise or pursue power, and engage in a wide array of other activities that variously encourage or discourage, create or transform, and reproduce or ignore identities.

(Cornell & Hartman 1998: 154)

## Argument of thesis

A discussion of the statement, 'We follow our cow...and forget our home,' serves to clarify the issues and questions that are to be explored in this thesis.

**'WE'**. The Fulani are the 'we' in question. 'We' implies the existence of a larger collectivity of individuals, unified and, in some senses, the same. As Burnham notes, 'many authors have remarked, the recognition of ethnic difference necessarily implies a "we/they" dichotomy, which means that an ethnic group cannot exist on its own' (1996: 5). The 'they' incorporates the whole of West Africa and beyond. One can find Fulani originating from all over West Africa and further afield in Ghana. Their 'they' are consequently many, depending on where they have lived etc.

According to Riesman (1984: 180)<sup>19</sup>: 'A Fulani has no feeling for the Fulani as an ethnic group.' Is this the situation in Greater Accra? Can there be a 'we' category, as expressed by Mr. Toure and many others, but at the same time no 'feeling' for the 'we' as an ethnic category, let alone ethnic group? The first issue for consideration is therefore whether there is a 'we' to be spoken of, in view of the enormous differences that exist between different groups who call themselves (or are called by others), Fulani. In other words, 'who are the Fulani in Greater Accra'?

This thesis is accordingly concerned with the senses and circumstances under which Fulani consider themselves to be the same or different. The markers of Fulani identity, as recognized by Fulani and non-Fulani alike, are examined as are the factors that allow them as a distinct ethnic category to maintain and perpetuate this identity in Greater Accra, not simply becoming absorbed into other Muslim groups or a mixed *zongo* identity.

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<sup>19</sup> Riesman's own fieldwork was in Northern Burkina Faso, among the Fulani and their former slaves, the RiimaayBe. He conducted his research in the 1970s.

The markers of Fulani (we) group identity, as portrayed in the literature and debated in Greater Accra, invariably include Islam<sup>20</sup> (though of course not all Fulani are Muslim); the sense of a common origin (though there are many competing myths of origin); the *Fulfulde* language (not all Fulani speak Fulfulde and many non-Fulani speak it) and *pulaaku*, (the Fulani moral and ethical code, not recognized or understood by all). However, these 'core' markers of Fulani ethnic group identity are not to be regarded as fixed and unchanging. As Zubko (1993: 201) remarks of the 'Fulbe cultural type...divergent processes increasing heterogeneity...is one of the most essential Fulbe ethnic characteristics'.

Riesman's provocative statement below provides a useful approach for thinking about co-operation and conflict between and among those who identify themselves as Fulani in Greater Accra,

Co-operation....does not exist in most Fulani societies. When we Westerners [sic!] use that word we have in mind a group of people working together for a common goal, a goal that will benefit everyone relatively equally. Fulani do work together, but when they do so it is to help specific individuals, not the community as a whole. *For the Fulani the community as a living entity in its own right does not exist; what does exist is the bond of friendship or kinship that links one person to another, and all help that people give one another aims at strengthening such bonds.* What we call co-operation the Fulani see as a kind of coercion, because in working for the common good they are working to help people whom they do not want to help and whom they might well wish to harm.

(Riesman 1984: 179, my emphasis)

Does a sense of community exist among certain, if not all, segments of Fulani society in Greater Accra? If so, in what ways is this expressed? Do Fulani in general co-operate with one another? The question is approached through examining the following issues: their patterns of residence within Greater Accra,

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<sup>20</sup> Riesman (1984: 179) states, 'being a Muslim is today part of the ethnic identity of being Fulani'.



issues of friendship, alliances and kinship bonds and the ways in which important rites of passage - in particular marriages - are arranged, and the roles of Fulani ethnic group associations in Greater Accra.

The social identity of the Fulani in Greater Accra needs to be understood in the context of their position as 'aliens' and 'strangers' in the eyes of the state as well as popular perception. Given the individual, and sometimes isolated, nature of some of the migration events of those coming to Ghana (now and in the past), people often rely on bonds of friendships, mutual self-help groups and other forms of alliance with like-minded individuals. The bases on which these bonds of friendship are formed are numerous. They include country of origin, clan membership, sex, age, generation etc. The networks newcomers use to establish themselves socially in Greater Accra, among other Fulani, as well as other ethnic groups will be considered.

Fulani are settled in various parts of densely populated, urban Accra, the peri-urban fringe and outlying rural areas. The residential location of individuals within Greater Accra greatly affects their livelihoods and therefore their status and social identity among other Fulani. There is only one localized, settled Fulani community to speak of in Greater Accra - New Madina. Fifty years of co-operation, between the three large families living there, shows how friendships are cemented by self-help associations, and how these friendships are turned into kinship, through marriage alliances and perpetuated through bonds of fostering.

There are many Fulani ethnic associations (*suudu-baabas*) in Greater Accra (now and in the past). The criteria upon which membership of these different associations is based are diverse. They include country of origin, sex, age and length of residence in Ghana etc. The characteristics of those individuals who choose to collaborate and co-operate, as well as those who choose not to, are evidence of the types of communities being fostered.

**FOLLOW.** Another part of the statement involves 'following'. The cow led and 'we' followed. By following cows, Fulani have travelled and moved into other lands and territories. Movement and migration characterize the history of the Fulani in West Africa in general. For centuries individuals and whole communities have been 'following'. Following cows, in their quest for better pasture land and water, following their religious leaders and instigating *jihads* in order to spread Islam and, in the case of women and children, following spouses and kin.

Migration is not usually an arbitrary and/or haphazard event. Moving on is often tied to the search for livelihood and survival. Without the continuing search for good pastureland and water sources, animals will not survive. Young men move not only to shift herds to better grazing grounds, they also move to search for jobs to ensure survival, when they have no cows. In their quest for suitable marriage partners for their children and grandchildren, the older generation often send young brides, who may relocate long distances to join their new husbands. The distances involved can range from a shift to a neighbouring compound to migration to another state thousands of kilometres away.

Not all movements are voluntary, some are forced upon individuals and communities by ecological, political or domestic dictates. Some migration events are planned others are unplanned. Some are spontaneous responses to critical, sometimes life threatening, situations. Riesman (1984: 182) postulates that a basic response of both nomadic and semi-sedentary Fulani to stress in the environment is mobility. He goes on to say:

Perhaps because the basic adaptation [mobility] is so successful, it is applied to many other situations of stress, including serious famine, family conflicts, population pressure, political struggles, and war. From our Western perspective we might be tempted to think the Fulani are always 'running away' from their problems, rather than facing them. For the kinds of problems the Fulani face, however, leaving a place and striking out on one's own can be a true solution.

(Riesman 1984: 182)

What are 'the kinds of problems the Fulani face'? (Riesman 1984: 182). In order to understand the reasons individuals have relocated throughout West Africa and beyond, as well as within Ghana, these problems are uncovered through retelling stories. The individuals themselves each have their own stories. They illustrate the numerous reasons why Fulani have come to Greater Accra, and the relative centrality of cows in these movements.

**COW.** In the statement, not only was there one group, 'we', there was also one 'cow', common to all. The 'cow' is important if not fundamental to the Fulani. For some Fulani groups and individuals cattle rearing is an inherent part of their lives (materially/economically, socially and psychologically). For other Fulani, engaged in diverse kinds of economic activity, the 'cow' is a characteristic marker of Fulani difference, relevant only in a purely symbolic sense as a badge of group unity. As Riesman (1984: 181) has observed, while actual economic dependence on cattle is greater among the nomadic Fulani than it is among the semi-sedentary ones, both groups perceive their dependence to be very great.

'Where people reside' affects the occupations in which they engage. The livelihoods of those living in the rural areas, the peri-urban fringe of Accra and the urban centres are therefore examined, in historical as well as contemporary perspective, with reference to the importance of cattle in people's lives. The stories of many individuals were collected and these are used to illustrate the real and symbolic importance of cattle in their lives.

As well as mobility of people between various locations in Greater Accra and between pastoralism and other occupations, the movements of cattle within and beyond Greater Accra also have their own story. This is told through a detailed case study of one particular individual, Alhaji Diallo, his family and herds. This illustrates the necessarily flexible and adaptable nature of the lives of some of those who have remained cattle keepers. It also exemplifies the mobile strategies they have employed

in order to maintain their way of life (dependent upon continuous access to extensive grazing land and water).

The region of Greater Accra is rapidly urbanizing. Those who work with cattle (as hired herdsman or cattle owners in their own right) and their families are increasingly having to find new areas to relocate, in order to guarantee good grazing land for their cattle. They are gradually moving outwards into other regions away from Accra, as the city and its suburbs expand. They are 'drifting'<sup>21</sup> out from Accra.

**FORGET OUR HOME.** The idea of home is an important theme in the context of Fulani identity in Greater Accra. Is there one home either in reality or in myth, recognized by all, despite their various nationalities and regions of origin? Do those who move 'forget' their homes and establish new ones in their new environments, or do their original homes continue to play a meaningful part in their lives (economically, socially, ideologically)? Given the often precarious political climate of West Africa, is Ghana, more specifically Greater Accra, a viable, secure 'home' for those considered by many to be of foreign provenance? Clearly Greater Accra in particular, and Ghana in general, is a permanent and 'relatively' new site for settlement for Fulani.

The central problem of this thesis is therefore the extent and pertinence of, 'We follow our cow and forget our home', in analysing and portraying the condition of the Fulani in Greater Accra today. The question is not simply, why have individuals come (through having followed cows or for whatever other reason) but, once they are here, how do people, whose original experiences, nationalities, and customs differ (yet ultimately claiming the same ethnic affiliation) manage and negotiate these differences in Greater Accra? What cultural, social, economic or political channels exist or are created in Greater Accra, through which these individuals negotiate and express themselves and their ethnic and social identities or through which they establish new

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<sup>21</sup> 'Migratory drift' (Stenning 1957)

homes? These issues are analysed by comparing and contrasting the experiences of a variety of different people, recently arrived immigrants, settled individuals and those 'made-in-Ghana' - men and women, young and old, slave born and nobles.

## Subsequent Chapters

Having examined the central themes and 'problems' of this thesis, what follows is a brief outline of the subsequent chapters that severally address these issues.

Chapter Two: Who are 'we'? Crossing boundaries through space and time, is divided into two parts. The first part looks at West Africa and the second at the Fulani. It reviews the ways in which they have been represented in the literature, in time, space and myth. The context of this study is West Africa. The geographical, demographic, climatic and socio-political characteristics of this dynamic sub-region are outlined in relation to the major themes of migration and survival. The reasons why people move are numerous. Many of these reasons are related to the need to survive. Climatic and environmental stress, political unrest, and economic instability are all factors that affect the lives of individuals and motivate them to move.

In the second part of this chapter, the ample literature on the Fulani is surveyed in specific relation to the themes of identity, movement and survival. The literature includes works from several different disciplines and perspectives, (ethnographic, geographical and historical) located in various parts of West Africa now and in the past.

Chapter Three: Following cows and forgetting home, moves from an exploration of 'we' (Fulani) in the context of the available literature, to a consideration of the Fulani in Ghana in general and Greater Accra in particular. The stories of individuals are told by way of graphic illustration. The reasons why people move are explored through these life stories, as well as the relevance (symbolic or real) of cows and pastoralism in

the past and the present in decisions to move. The homes (permanent/transitory) and settlements (urban, peri-urban and rural) that Fulani have established in Greater Accra are analysed as 'sites' of (ethnic and social) identity construction.

Chapter Four: Globalizing Kinship: Marriage and mobility among far flung Fulani families, looks at Fulani marriage in Greater Accra. Marriage is perhaps the most important site for the construction and perpetuation of ethnic identity. Demographically the Fulani represent a small minority of the Ghanaian and Greater Accra population, yet despite their relatively small numbers, they are to a certain extent managing to maintain themselves as a 'we' group in Greater Accra.

This chapter presents evidence on the types/kinds (and endurance) of family and non-family marriages (gathered from the life histories of over two hundred Fulani individuals in Greater Accra). It examines the extent to which individuals marry into their own or other Fulani families, as well as occasionally non-Fulani; the roles that certain individuals play in orchestrating such marriages; the allegiances and bonds that are formed and the enduring nature of such marriages (family, Fulani and non-Fulani) through space and time.

Chapter Five: Mobile Stories and Gendered Lives: Socialization, Training and Education, takes as its site of identity construction, the education, training and socialization experiences of individual boys and girls, men and women, young and old, from an array of different countries of origin. Individual experiences of education are analysed across the life-cycle, as are the gendered differentials in the opportunities afforded. Thirdly the mobile nature of these experiences (geographically and between different types of training) is explored.

Individuals are socialized in various ways (cattle herding, reading the Koran and attendance at state and private schools). Adults make choices at an early stage in children's careers regarding the types of lives they expect them to lead. There are negative and positive qualities associated with each of these (in the lives and minds of some of the Fulani in Greater Accra). The divergence and differences in educational

opportunities between boys and girls, men and women are considered, as are the ways in which these affect their potential for future choices and life options.

The focus of the third section is the mobile nature of educational experiences, across time (as in the case of mobile, male koranic students) and the mobility between and across different types of training experienced by individuals over their life-cycles.

Chapter Six: *Suudu-Baaba*: Fulani Ethnic Associations is divided into two parts, the first examines the composition and nature of Fulani ethnic associations in Greater Accra, the second examines the 'public issues', the goals and ambitions of several of these associations and the rhetoric used to justify them.

Looking at the various *suudu-baaba* organizations in Greater Accra (now and in the past) we see that the criteria for membership are diverse (national, regional, youth/elder, recent immigrant/born-in-Ghana.). These factors themselves and the inherent issues of difference and sameness are explored. The ways in which these associations are established and organized is detailed.

The second section considers the goals and aspirations of these associations. Analysing the public rhetoric, we find that the concept of Fulani 'unity' is expressed in most of the *suudu-baabas*, as is the desire to safeguard Fulani culture and customs in Greater Accra and provide assistance to members (morally and financially) in times of need.

Chapter Seven: Performance and identity: Conflict and contradiction in social drama, is divided into three sections. The first explores the ways in which the similarities and differences between and among Fulani groups are discussed and debated. In the second section, rhetoric and reality, the contradictory nature of some of these debates on Fulani unity are deconstructed. Section three focuses on the negotiation of tensions in traditions apparent in many public and private events.

Chapter Eight: We have no home like Ghana, concludes by returning to the notion of co-operation as raised by Riesman and by comparing the Fulani experiences with survival, movement and identity construction and maintenance in Greater Accra with other Fulani communities throughout West Africa and beyond. The state of Benin in particular provides useful comparative, contemporary material.



## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **Who are 'we'?: Crossing boundaries through space and time**

#### **West Africa<sup>22</sup>**

Based on political, ethno-cultural, geographical (climatic), and economic factors, the countries of West Africa form a loosely integrated organic region where major inter-territorial and international migrations have occurred historically.

(Makinwa-Adebusoye 1992)

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first, addresses the broader context (social, historical, geographical, political, economic) for this research, namely the sub-region of West Africa. The peculiarities and characteristics of this region fundamentally influence the story that this thesis has to tell. The second part of this chapter takes a look at the Fulani in the context of West Africa. It reviews the ways in which this group has been represented in the literature in time, space and myth, as well as focusing on the issues of mobility, identity and survival that are pivotal to this study.

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<sup>22</sup> 'As a term 'West Africa' is a European invention intended to include all those areas linked with Western Europe by trade operating from ports south of the Sahara and West of the Cameroons...The idea of a West African whole is comparatively recent and dates mainly from the federation of the French West African territories, and the British recognition of a regional affinity between the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. Spanish Guinea still includes territories both within and outside the unit, whilst the Southern Cameroons have become part of the Cameroon Republic of Central Africa. For the West Africans themselves there was no notion of such a regional unit, although it would be a mistake to suppose that until the colonial era their horizons were entirely tribal. Trading contacts and the creation of large states such as Mali and Yorubaland enabled people to visualize greater units even if these were sometimes seen in social rather than areal terms' (Morgan & Pugh 1969: xv).

There has been no universally accepted account of which countries comprise West Africa. The exact definition of its boundaries thus remains contentious. West Africa constitutes, 'the most heterogeneous conglomeration of states in all Africa, and has the largest number of mini-states' (Asante 1986: 35).<sup>23</sup>

West Africa is also therefore considered to be a geographical region.<sup>24</sup> An important feature of the sub-region is the diversity of its climatic and topographic features.<sup>25</sup> Agriculture and pastoralism, both major elements in West Africa's economy, depend upon the vagaries of climate (particularly fluctuations of moisture supply and humidity). The quantity and incidence of rainfall distribution is the most important factor in determining climatic zones in the region. It also has a profound effect on the population distribution of both animals and humans.<sup>26</sup> More than half of the area included in West Africa is desert and belongs geographically to the Sahel (Morgan & Pugh 1969: 9).

The total population of West Africa in 1950 was estimated to be 63 million (UN 1996: Annex 1 and II). In 1985 the World Bank estimated a population of 170 million. In 1995 it was estimated as approximately 209 million.

<sup>23</sup> The boundaries of which were arbitrarily and artificially imposed by the Colonizing powers.

The most widely accepted definition is that the region known as West Africa, consists of the following sixteen countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

<sup>24</sup> Some authors would make a distinction between 'West Africa' and the 'Sub-region'. However for the purposes of this study, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed 'Climate has been described as the most important factor in West African life' (Morgan & Pugh 1969: xxiii).

<sup>26</sup> It has been suggested that as a result of varied rainfall patterns, there are five observable climatic divisions within the sub-region. These regions (from north to south) are as follows: Saharan, Sahelian, Sudanic, Guinean and West Guinean.

1. Saharan with rainfall only in some years

2. Sahelian with rainfall in every year, but with a rainy season of less than 2 ½ months on average so that in most years crop plants cannot be grown without irrigation

3. Sudanic with one rainy season of 2 ½ to 7 months

4. Guinean with 2 rainy seasons totalling approximately 7 to 12 months (Morgan and Pugh 1969: xxiv)

UN population projections for 2025 and 2050 forecast 446 and 638 million respectively. The populations of the individual states range in size from the smallest, Cape Verde, which has a population of about 350,000, to Nigeria with well over 100 million, and about half the region's population (Makinwa-Adebusoye 1992). About half of Africa's total population lives in West Africa.

The number of ethnic groups speaking a variety of different languages in West Africa is difficult to estimate (Murdock 1959: 425-56; Mabogunje 1976). The map of West African 'cultures' in the *Atlas of World Cultures: A Geographic Guide to Ethnographic Literature* listed (and plotted the location of) only 168 different 'cultures'.<sup>27</sup> However in the state of Nigeria, there are thought to be more than 200 different ethnic groups and 400 languages. In Ghana alone, the 'counting' of linguistic and cultural groups has been stressed and suppressed over time and up to one hundred or more groups have been variously distinguished.<sup>28</sup> A recent survey of languages in Ghana, stated the number as seventy-two (Grimes 1996: 1 Internet). While in a book entitled *Ghanaian Languages*, forty-four languages were listed as being 'indigenous to Ghana' (Hall 1983: 6).

<sup>27</sup> The atlas was designed 'to direct cross-cultural researchers to key ethnographic works regarding a geographical region of interest' (Price 1989: 7). They cautioned that, 'This is not a reference book containing information on all known cultures of the world...The "cultural" or "ethnic" groups identified in the atlas are simply some of the groups that have been identified in the extant body of ethnographic data' (Price 1989: 7-8).

<sup>28</sup> 'In 1960 roughly 100 linguistic and cultural groups were recorded in Ghana. Although later censuses placed less emphasis on the ethnic and cultural composition of the population, differences of course existed and had not disappeared by the mid-1990s' (*Ghana a Country Profile*, US Library of Congress Country Study (N/D) Internet)

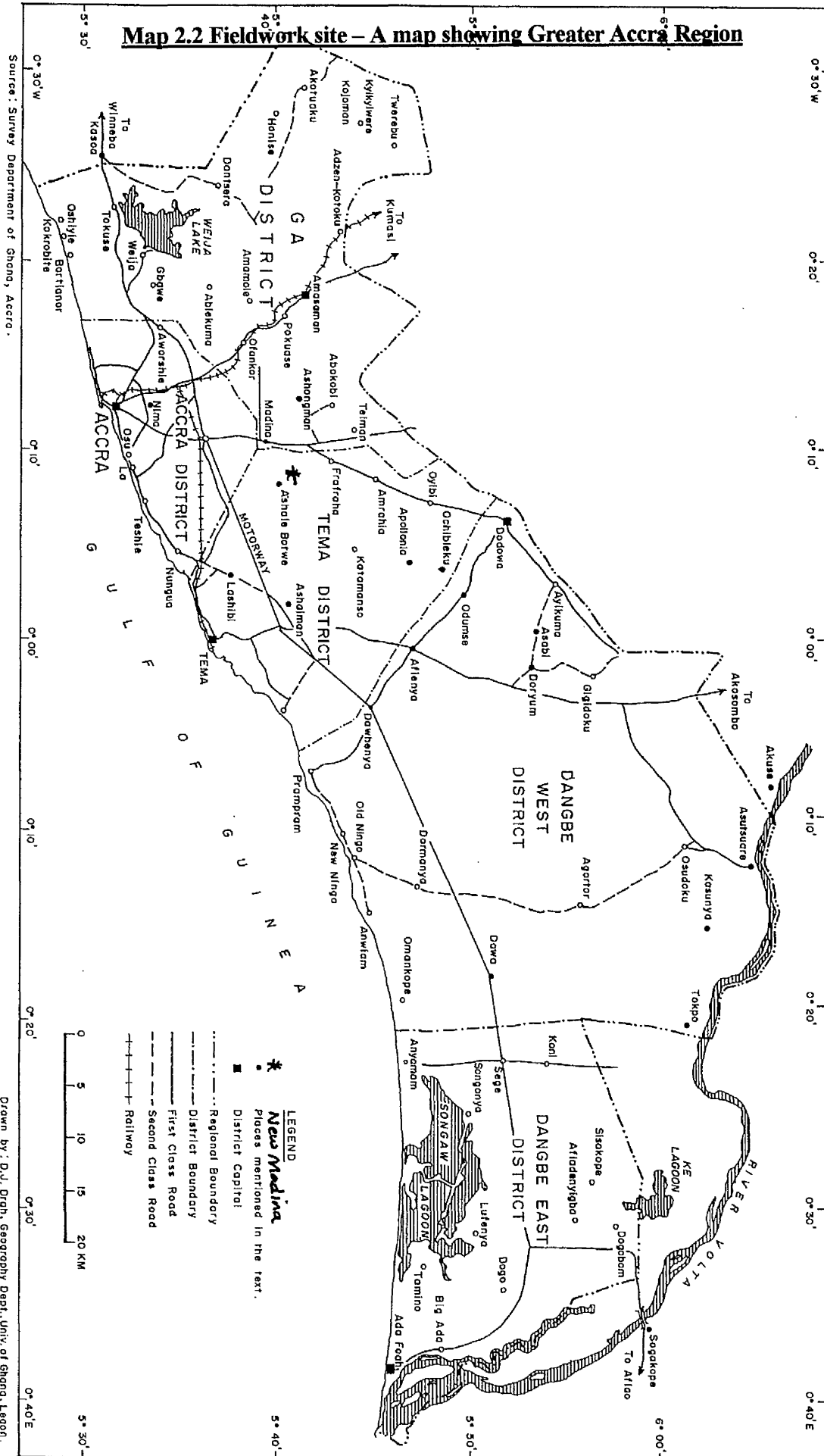
FIG. A MAP OF GHANA SHOWING THE LOCATION OF GREATER ACCRA REGION.



Source: Survey Department of Ghana, Accra.

Drawn by: D. J. Drah, Geography Dept., Univ. of Ghana,  
P. O. Box 59, Legon.

FIG. A MAP SHOWING GREATER ACCRA REGION



## Migration

Migration, of a short term, seasonal or permanent nature,<sup>29</sup> whether forced or voluntary, involving movement to a neighbouring village, or across the sub-region, crossing many language and culture groups, has been a part of the lives of many West African peoples since time immemorial.<sup>30</sup> As Curtin (1994: 5) has recently commented, 'In one sense all human migration was migration out of Africa'.

In the past many such movements were forced by war, slavery, drought, disease and trade and involved whole families and communities. Others involved individuals migrating to find work or to marry, to farm or trade. Many people in the region have made movement their way of life. Past movements of populations played a large part in shaping contemporary social, political and demographic events in the region and in the redistribution of resources, just as present day migrations will change the future. Sending communities are affected by these movements, as well as those which receive.

In pre-colonial times trade routes were well established linking different peoples and different sections of the continent together. In West Africa in general, 'the drift of population...has been from north to south, out of the Savanna country toward the forest and coastal regions, where economic development was concentrated' (Curtin 1994: 37-38). Thus the rapid urbanization of many of the region's cities increasingly brought more and more different groups into contact, requiring each to negotiate their relationships with the other. This brought to the fore issues of ethnicity and identity, as 'strangers' came into host communities. In the past there were permanent communities of strangers in many West African societies. These strangers were mainly traders and their families engaged in

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<sup>29</sup> See Guilmoto (1998) and Hammar et al. (1997).

<sup>30</sup> See Amin (1974) and Safir (1996).

various trading activities, both local and foreign. These strangers lived in areas of towns, sometimes called *zongos* (Skinner 1963: 308).

Trade was not the only impetus to move. Another common and regular movement was that of nomadic groups, moving with their livestock looking for greener pastures to graze (Anarfi 1995: 69). During the early colonial era, however, a different situation pertained. This was characterized by forced labour and mainly involved the areas administered by the French (Hagberg 1988: 43-44). Burkina Faso and Togo nationals (to a lesser extent) were the major victims of this oppressive practice.

Such forced movements gave way to migration of contract labourers. Local leaders paid them to provide a fixed number of workers for plantations or public works. With the abolition of forced labour, 'migration had already become a habit, or even an addiction for many of the young men of Burkina Faso and other interior parts of West Africa' (Anarfi 1995: 70). The nature of such migration altered and was of a voluntary nature. The flows of migrants became dominated by mainly unskilled, male labourers. 'The desire to wander was sustained by economic and social pressures at home and incentives at the places of destination' (Anarfi: 1995: 70). More recently, as Nadji (1996: 7) points out, migration flows from West Africa to countries outside Africa continue to maintain old colonial connections. The three main destinations noted are France, Great Britain and Portugal. To this one should add a more recent destination, the United States. Of the contemporary situation, Zachariah notes,

West Africa is one of the few regions of the world where relatively large-scale free movement of people across international boundaries still takes place. Where once movement was compulsory because of wars, the slave trade in the pre-colonial period, and forced labor during the early colonial period, it has become, in recent years, a free migration of individuals and families as part of an effort to better their living conditions.

(Zachariah 1981: 3)

With the introduction and imposition of state boundaries at the time of independence from colonial rule, those wishing to relocate faced new challenges. Contemporary ethnicities and states were crystallized together. No longer could a person just be Ewe for example, but suddenly it mattered on which side of the border they happened to find themselves, as to whether they were Ghanaian or Togolese nationals. Thus, everyone belonged to a state and in order to pass from one state to another, however temporarily, there was the added problem of having to acquire legal documents and seek permission to cross from one country to another. This of course was not always difficult. Within the francophone and anglophone blocs movement was relatively easy during the colonial period. However at certain periods of time, for some people regulations were sufficiently enforced to curtail cross-border movements.

However, the national borders of West African states are far from impenetrable without official papers. Undocumented, illegal crossings presumably account for fairly substantial numbers of people. For as Stalker (1994: 231) has noted, the borders are generally very porous and every day hundreds if not thousands of people cross the borders of West Africa's state boundaries unchecked. Whether a journey counts as national or international may be of little significance to the migrant. A critical consequence of the fact that the majority of cross-border flows are undocumented is that it is virtually impossible to gather accurate flow statistics (Stalker 1994).

Another consequence of these 'illegal', undocumented border crossings (whether daily, seasonal or nomadic etc.) is that, as Stalker points out in the case of the Fulani, individuals may 'manage to claim whatever nationality suits them best at a given time' (Stalker 1994: 231). Therefore, for some people, national affiliation may be a malleable feature of their social identities. Given the precarious and frequently changing fortunes (political, economic and climatic) of most of West Africa's states, this flexibility can be viewed as a critical component of a successful survival strategy.



The direction of flows of migrants is far from arbitrary. There are historical reasons that tie together certain nations, whether based on common borders, as in Benin and Nigeria (see Flynn 1997); language as in Nigeria and Ghana, or ethnic affiliation or economic institutions. From pre-colonial times through to the post-independence era, migrations have most generally been from north to south. Particularly between the 1920s and 1950s, the economic magnet of Ghana's mines and cocoa made that country a major destination of migrants from all over West Africa. This included the Fulani drovers who followed cattle to Ghana's, then relatively prosperous, markets. Shuhaibu Abdul-Hairu (in Chapter One) is a case in point. In the 1970s however, the economic pull of Nigeria's oil wealth added to east to west, west to east movement.

While the 1970s and 1980s saw a situation in which the majority of intra-West African migration was urban and coastal oriented, this situation may be changing, and that :

...the 80's crisis seems to have had the effect of re-equilibrating the flows between rural and urban areas, and between coastal and landlocked countries. At the turn-point of the 90's, we are seeing a new profile in population movements in West Africa.

(Traore & Bocquier 1997: 2)

In global perspective, the gap between demographic and economic growth rates would appear to be a significant determinant of worker emigration to the major receiving countries. In West Africa the annual population growth rate is estimated to be 3.1% while the economic growth rate for the sub-region as a whole is around 1.4% (Nadji 1996: 19). The UNDP's Human Development Report of 1995 ranked five West African countries as among ten at the bottom of the Development Index, namely: Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone and Niger.

Lindsay noted that, 'From 1965 to 1975 approximately 6,900,000 people migrated within and between the countries of Ivory Coast, Senegal, Sierra Leone,

Togo, Liberia, Gambia, Ghana, and Mali' (Lindsay 1985: 1 and Zachariah 1980: 1, iii). Within West Africa the countries which receive the most immigrants, are currently, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. (Nadji 1996: 7). However, fortunes ebb and flow and countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, traditionally receiving countries, are themselves currently large exporters of migrant labour globally.

### **The flux & flow of fortunes: Natural and man-made motivations for movement**

Migration means different things to different people at different times  
of their lives.

(David 1995: 7)

There are many reasons why people move.<sup>31</sup> For some individuals, their motivations may be of a political, economic, climatic, environmental or personal (domestic) nature, or a combination of any of these. Large-scale movements of populations across post-independence, international state boundaries in West Africa are often related to historical, economic and political factors (Nadji 1996). Other factors however also have an important impact on the movements of people, such as climatic and environmental events, and other man-made disasters. In addition diseases threatening the lives of animals and people, such as rinderpest outbreaks may be critical (Nawathe & Lamorde 1984). Such large scale migrations may affect certain members of society more than others, for example the poor, pastoralists or a certain ethnic group.

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<sup>31</sup> As to migrant type Nadji(1996: 5-6) adopts the following categorization: permanent working residents, temporary working residents, highly skilled professionals, clandestine residents, nomadic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. In the present study individuals in all of these 'categories' were observed. These categories can however be misleading as individuals over the course of their lives can and do move between them.

Migration... is not only a response to changing patterns of resource availability and utilisation but also the outcome of an individual, family or group decision-making process. It may be viewed as the survival strategy or the perceived choice to better life of an individual, family or group.

(Boateng 1995: iii)

For centuries, throughout West Africa, individuals and whole families and communities have survived difficult times (climatic, economic, political etc.) by moving on. Moving on in a search for agricultural land to farm, for water and pasture for their animals, in their quest for opportunities to trade. An example of life-course relocation is found in the case study entitled, 'Mobility and Survival: Salamatu's Story' in Chapter Three.

### Environmental Stress

In the Sahel, much recent movement is a direct response to environmental stress. Changing patterns of rainfall, in particular long term trends towards lower levels, affect many of the countries bordering the Sahara (David 1995: 2; Derrick 1977, 1984).<sup>32</sup> Drought is a relative and cyclical phenomenon in the Sahel.<sup>33</sup> Documented evidence of droughts affecting the Niger bend in the eighteenth century indicates that five-year droughts were not uncommon (Schove 1973 in Caldwell 1975: 19). In more recent years, the 1940s and 1950s were relatively prosperous years for the peoples of the Sahel, as years of good rainfall followed good (Caldwell 1975: 17).<sup>34</sup> As a result farmers and pastoralists, the Fulani in

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<sup>32</sup> 'Statistics portray this harsh experience. If two thirty year periods, between 1931 - 1960 and 1961 - 1990 are compared, rainfall in the Sahelian region has declined by between 20 and 40 percent' (Cited from Hume and Kelly 1992 in David and Rosalind 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Caldwell (1975:3) (according to United Nations usage) defines the Sahel as the following countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

<sup>34</sup> In the Sahelian countries, 'the 1940's experienced average rainfall for the decade as a whole, although annual fluctuations were probably greater than usual. But the 1950's were bonanza years with the Sahel averaging about one-fifth more rain than average and the Sudanic farming zone about one-tenth more (Caldwell 1975:17).

particular, began moving gradually northwards.<sup>35</sup> In fact it has been claimed that, 'So moist was it that the Fulani...pastoralists of northern Nigeria and southern Niger drifted as far north as the Air plateau beyond Agadez' (Caldwell 1975: 17). By 1969 however the situation had dramatically changed, and from 1969 into the 1980s the Sahel was devastated by an uncommonly disastrous drought (Scott 1984).<sup>36 37</sup>

The demographic impact of this particularly extensive period of drought was appalling. Unknown and unknowable numbers of people died and the birth rate fell (because of enforced separation).<sup>38</sup> The estimated percent of animal stock lost in 1973 alone ranged from 20% to 50% (Caldwell 1975: 20). Such estimates however are very hard to make as a large proportion of the herdsmen had moved southwards. Whatever the reality regarding the numbers of animals lost, there is no doubt that many had been slaughtered, had died, been sold or moved.<sup>39</sup>

Caldwell (1975: 26) cautions that the real lesson of the drought, 'was not how easily man succumbed to the drought but how tenacious he was in managing his survival.' Throughout this zone, therefore, the inhabitants have developed their own coping 'adaptive mechanisms' to permit them to survive during these and other times of hardship. Different groups with specific needs employ different

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<sup>35</sup> This shift to the north was helped by the improvements in technical innovations and development aid, which for example increased the numbers of water wells in the region.

<sup>36</sup> The drought of 1975-1977 was very severe in some parts of the Sahel. 'Some stations in the Sahel zone of Upper Volta had the lowest annual rainfall totals since instrumental records began. Dori and Tougan had 60 per cent and 62 per cent of the normal respectively in 1975, the lowest ever recorded. The analysis of rainfall data showed that the onset of the drought of 1972-1973 in Upper Volta was gradual, the series of dry years originating from 1968 with rainfall averages beginning to fall. For example, Ouahigouya on the fringe of the Sahel had 96 per cent in 1968, 84 per cent in 1969, 73 per cent in 1970 and 65 per cent of the normal in 1973' (Ofori Sarpong: 2-3).

<sup>37</sup> Drought is 'perceived as a climatic event' (Scott 1984: 1).

<sup>38</sup> Caldwell (1975: 26) cautions us not to give credence to the shocking mortality figures quoted in the newspapers of the day, he calls them 'figments of the imagination'.

<sup>39</sup> 'The markets of Kumasi in Ghana were deluged by cattle driven overland from the Niger Valley and beyond during the great 1913-14 drought' (Grove 1973b: 134 in Caldwell 1975: 49).

'mechanisms' when faced with environmental stress (Scott 1984: 49). Such 'adaptive mechanisms' included the eating of one's own animals and migration.<sup>40</sup>

The drought of 1970 to 1974 in particular produced large movements on a scale never before experienced, within and between the countries of West Africa. The terrible drought conditions displaced millions (Boutrais 1986: 153). Caldwell characterized the directions of these movements as follows:

...from Mauritania to Mali and Senegal; from Mali to Senegal, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey, Togo, Nigeria and even Ghana, (in spite of its restrictive immigration policy); from Upper Volta to the Ivory Coast, Ghana..., Dahomey and Togo; from Niger to Nigeria and the Sudan.

(Caldwell 1975: 28)

For pastoral Fulani in particular, one of their main survival strategies is movement. In Burkina Faso for instance:

The large scale exodus of nomads across the Upper Volta - Mali border into Upper Volta in search of water and pasture presented a great threat to peace. In a few cases it ended in bloody disputes between the 'resident nomads' in certain areas and the 'invading nomads' from Mali. The movements which were generally north-south...ignored international boundaries.

(Ofori-Sarpong 1980: 10)

Hagberg notes the same situation within Burkina Faso:

increasing immigration of Fulbe agro-pastoralists into the Comoé Province and other parts of southern Burkina Faso...It is a commonly held opinion that this migratory movement towards the south is caused mainly by recurrent droughts and consequent land degradation in the central and northern parts of the country which are the traditional Fulbe areas. Although the relatively permanent residence of Fulbe groups in the Comoé Province is a fairly recent phenomenon,

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<sup>40</sup> Other 'age-old' methods of adaptation include eating wild fruits and berries and hunting wild animals.

the frequent passage of Fulbe cattle towards the south, and the presence of Fulbe groups in the region is nothing new.

(Hagberg 1998: 15)

Although average rainfall levels have improved since the 1980s, the long term damage to vegetation cover is evident (David 1995: 2). Destruction of vegetation cover which has long term effects (to meet short term demands, for food, fuel, shelter...) is still apparent and proceeds unchecked. In Northern Ghana, for instance, the effects of soil erosion caused by increased population pressure during the time of the drought are still being felt.<sup>41</sup> Desertification continues and the Sahel steals southwards.<sup>42</sup>

As dry season job opportunities (reliant on higher rainfall levels) die out, expectations change and harvests become even more unpredictable, many people are seeking alternative ways of ensuring food security and meeting their cash needs. Given the dearth of off-farm income possibilities in much of the rural Sahel, people travel to towns or centres of economic activity to earn money.

(David 1995: 2)

### Disease

Disease epidemics can also force people to move (see the case of 'Oumar's Oscillating Occupations' in Chapter Three). In relation to cattle-keeping Fulani, one recurrent concern is rinderpest. Between 1980 and the 1983-84 recurrence of rinderpest in Nigeria, it was estimated that half a million cattle were killed and another million and a half were left with 'impaired...health' (Nawathe & Lamorde 1984: 575). The effects of this epidemic on the cattle keepers (mainly Fulani)

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<sup>41</sup> Hilton (1968: 279) in Caldwell (1975: 43).

<sup>42</sup> Desertification is defined as 'the spread of desert-like conditions due either to man or to climatic change' (Scott 1984: 1).



were tremendous.<sup>43</sup> Some Fulani became bankrupt, gave up their trade and migrated to towns and cities in search of better opportunities (Nawathe & Lamorde 1984: 578).<sup>44</sup>

### Political & economic unrest

The direction and strength of migration flows have been greatly affected by political as well as ecological and economic events and upheavals in the region. The Ghanaian Aliens Compliance Order of 1969 expelled hundreds of thousands of migrants from Ghana.<sup>45</sup> (Several of the case studies below tell of the direct effect of this policy on individual Fulani and their families.) Similarly, in 1984 over one million Ghanaians domiciled in Nigeria were sent flooding back unceremoniously to Ghana, causing huge logistical and socio-economic problems, as well as widespread human suffering and personal tragedies (Brydon 1985; Aluko 1985; Eades 1993: 131-132; Gravil 1985). Other estimates put the total number of 'illegal immigrants' expelled in Nigeria at 1.2 - 2 million (David 1995: 2; Peil 1979, 1979; Stapleton 1959).

Nations experiencing periods of peace and relative economic prosperity tend to act as magnets and draw towards them citizens of other nations, belonging to regions in relative hardship. However when the receiving areas also find themselves in a less fortunate political and economic situation, foreigners ('aliens'

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<sup>43</sup> In 1984 it was estimated that: 'Over 4 million Nigerians derive a livelihood from tending cattle' (Nawathe & Lamorde 1984: 578).

<sup>44</sup> The outbreaks of these epidemics are periodic and have recurred for centuries. One of the severest of these was the rinderpest epidemic of 1887-1891. It spread westwards from the Darfur region of Sudan through Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Northern Nigeria. It is believed to have devastated all the herds in its path. One estimate suggests that up to half of the herds owned by Fulani were lost (Azarya 1993: 40). Stenning (1959: 80) documented these same devastating effects of the 1887, 1914 and 1919 rinderpest epidemic in Northern Nigeria.

<sup>45</sup> Eades 1993 documented the effects of the Aliens Compliance Order on the Yoruba community in Tamale, Northern Ghana. He noted, 'In response to the Ghanaian government's "Aliens Compliance Order", which stated simply that all foreigners without proper documents had two weeks to leave the country, virtually all the Yoruba in Ghana returned to their towns of origin in Nigeria' (Eades 1993: 1)

as they are termed in Ghana) can often become the scapegoats for national grievances. In the past it has been:

During [these] periods of economic prosperity [that] nations have relaxed the regulation of migration across national boundaries. On the other hand, periods of declining economic conditions make international migrants very vulnerable to policy statements on immigration.

(Anarfi 1995: 69)

Nowhere is this vulnerability more evident than in the Ghanaian Aliens Compliance Order of 1969, a decree which, 'gave all aliens without residence permits two weeks either to obtain a residence permit or to leave' (Brydon 1985). This order used the so-called 'aliens' as scapegoats and led to the mass exodus of between 900,000 to 1,200,000 individuals from Ghana (Addo 1970; Adomako-Sarfoh 1974).

Regrettably, refugees are an increasing part of the demography of West Africa.<sup>46</sup> Since 1960, the beginning of the end of colonial rule, the numbers of displaced persons in Africa in general and West Africa in particular has been rising steadily. Such recent population movements in the sub-region have been brought about by inter-ethnic violence and civil-war, in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mauritania. In Liberia alone, Curtin (1994: 40) cites a Washington Post article of 6 March 1994, which estimated that there were two million refugees from Liberia in neighbouring countries, as well as displaced persons within the country itself.

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<sup>46</sup> I met one man who was a refugee from Mauritania. He had no travel documents and he said to me, 'Je n'ai pas aucun nationalité actuellement!'. He described to me the political and social circumstances under which he and his family had been forced to flee his homeland. His parents had both been born in Senegal, but moved to Mauritania where he himself was born. He lived in Mauritania until 1989, when he was 32 years old. He said that there was ethnic conflict between the Fulani, Moors and Tuareg. His family fled back to Senegal but life was very hard for them as they had lost all their cattle. After spending just six months with his family he decided to travel alone. So far he has lived in Mali, Cameroon and Gabon. Although I met him in Accra, he claimed to be just passing through, seeking medical attention, on his way back to his current domicile in Gabon.



Refugees have also affected Ghana's demography, now and in the past. As recently as 1994, it was estimated that there were as many as 110,000 refugees residing in Ghana. Over 90,000 were Togolese who had fled political violence at home. Twenty thousand were Liberians fleeing from civil war in their own country. There were also Ghanaian refugees in Ghana, those who had fled the inter-ethnic fighting in the north-east of Ghana in early 1994. It is estimated that at least 20,000 Ghanaians, out of an original group of about 150,000 people, were still internally displaced at the end of 1994 as a result of the northern conflict. Five thousand such northern Ghanaians are estimated to have taken up residence in neighbouring Togo (see *Ghana, A Country Study n.d.*).

The legal framework and context within which individuals in West Africa move has been altered somewhat by the formation in 1975 of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS (Gambari 1991; Shaw et al. 1994).<sup>47</sup>

The migratory pattern has to a large extent been influenced by colonial land use and territorial development patterns and the corresponding labour needs, particularly in the plantations; this explains the predominantly hinterland-to-coastal migratory patterns... A circulation space has thus been created in the sub-region in which movement takes place according to need; significantly, the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) recognizes this freedom of movement.

(Nadji 1996: 7-8)

ECOWAS marked the first concerted efforts to facilitate the movement of people within the sub-region legally. All sixteen West African countries are members of ECOWAS. The aim of the organization is to foster regional economic integration.<sup>48</sup> The provisions of the treaty provided among other things '...for the

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<sup>47</sup> In parallel existence to ECOWAS is a six country Francophone alliance called CEAO.

<sup>48</sup> Article 12 states as its objectives the promotion of: '...co-operation and development in virtually all fields of economic activity, particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters' (Article 12, in Asante 1986: 62).

establishment of a customs union among the member-states through the progressive elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade' (Article 12 Ezenwe 1983: 34). As Asante (1986: 150) noted, until the introduction of the protocol, the entry (and exit) of 'the alien' was traditionally the jealously guarded preserve of the state.

A 'Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment' was signed in May 1970 (Nadji 1996: 34). The right to enter, reside and establish business in any of the member states was to be achieved in three stages. The first stage, which took immediate effect, was the right to enter without visa.<sup>49</sup> The second was the right of residence, the third the right of a citizen of a member state to establish a business in another (Asante 1986: 151). An important step was taken, when in June of 1989, it was decided that a common travel document to, 'facilitate the travel of persons within the community,' should be introduced (Economist Intelligence Unit 1989; West Africa 1990; Nadji 1996: 34).

In real terms, however, the ECOWAS protocol provided for only a fractional freedom. Many of West Africa's citizens are still bribed and intimidated at border posts, and a citizen of the community, 'faced with a deportation order in an ECOWAS member state has no implied legal rights to any hearing' (Asante 1986: 152). ECOWAS citizens are also not supposed to take up employment in a member state without a work permit.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> 'Under the first stage, a citizen of the community has the right to visit any member's state other than his own for a period not exceeding 90 days without visa requirements. He shall, however, be required to possess valid travel documents. These should include international health certificates in the case of all visiting ECOWAS visitors, and valid driving licence, document of ownership, insurance policy, and international customs carnet recognized within the community in the case of persons driving vehicles into another partner state. Visiting ECOWAS expatriates can, however, upon application be granted extension of their time of stay. Notwithstanding these provisions clearly stipulate under Article 3 of the protocol, member states of the Community 'shall reserve the right to refuse admission into their territory...any citizen who comes within the category inadmissible immigrants under their laws.' However, the provisions of the protocol should not operate to the prejudice of citizens of the community who are already in residence and established in a member state provided they comply with the law in general and in particular the immigration laws of the member state' (Asante 1986: 151-152).

<sup>50</sup> This however, is a section of the law/protocol, commonly flouted, as

Having examined the context of this study, West Africa, the focus is now narrowed and attention shifts to look at the position of the Fulani in this region. The literature is reviewed in relation to the interconnected themes of this thesis - movement, identity and survival.

## **The Fulani on the move: Representations in space, time & myth**

The identification and portraiture of populations as Fulbe (Fulani, Peul) has varied, both historically and currently, with time and ecological location, as well as with the interests and knowledge of the conceptualizer or researcher.

(Frantz 1993: 11)

### **Where are the Fulani? : Cartographic representations**

The Fulani are the most widely scattered ethnic group in the whole of West Africa. They are to be found in a more or less continuous belt across the sub-region, stretching from The Gambia and Senegal in the west to Cameroon and beyond in the east. However, any attempt to delineate and define their spatial extent is in a sense misleading. The cartographic evidence presented to try to encapsulate and represent the areal extent of the Fulani, has changed significantly over time. Accordingly, each attempt to map out and thus delineate the location of the scattered Fulani population needs to be taken on its own merits, as an outcome of the different criteria used by various authors. In addition, the

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demonstrated by the 1983 and 1985 expulsions from Nigeria of all unskilled foreigners working and residing illegally in the country. Ghanaians were particularly affected.

historical and demographic contexts within which each map was created also have to be taken into consideration.

In a recent article, Boutrais (1994a) calls, 'Pour une nouvelle cartographie des Peuls', in other words for a 're-mapping of the Fulani'. (See map 2.3 below) He argues that maps need to be updated to take into account the migration and dispersion of Fulani groups which continue to take place. He remarks that the most notable of these dispersions has been to the north and south of areas traditionally thought of as Fulani locations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Adebayo (1997).

# Map 2.3 A re-mapping of the Fulani world

(From L'archipel Peul, 133-139, 5, Cahiers d'études Africaines, 1994, 118-139)

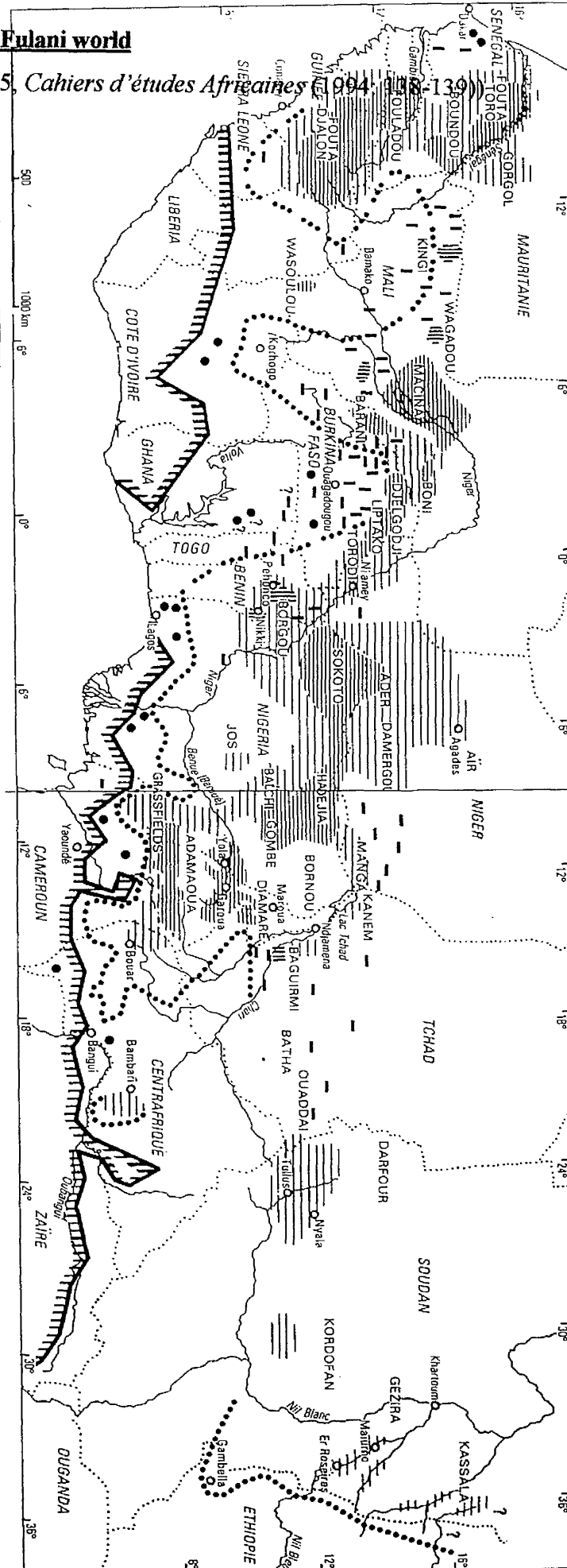
peuplement peul dans le cadre  
des colonisations politiques  
autres structures politiques

peuplement peul dans le cadre  
autres structures politiques

peuplement peul à l'époque coloniale  
limite sud supposée des Peuls  
depuis les indépendances

noyau isolé de peuplement peul  
présence supposée de Peuls

limite schématique de la zone forestière



In mapping out where the Fulani are to be found, Boutrais notes that linguistic criteria are often used. He however observed that, 'Les cartes linguistiques ne recoupent pas toujours des identités de peuplement, spécialement dans le cas des Peuls' (Boutrais 1994: 137). Thus the linguistic criteria upon which many maps of Fulani geographical location are based are not as clear cut and simple as may first appear. For such a basis takes no account of the exceptions to the rule nor of the assimilation and osmosis which takes place across and between ethnic groups on the margins. There are examples of groups of people who, although originally Fulani, and possibly still speaking Fulfulde, have adopted new ethnic identities.<sup>52</sup>

The fluid and open spatial metaphors employed in the past to conceptualise the spatial extent of the Fulani have included 'aires', 'espaces' 'monde' and 'diaspora' to name but a few (Newman 1995: 130). The most recent metaphor offered is that of 'L'archipel peul' (Fulani archipelago) (*Cahiers d'études Africaines* 1994: 133-35). This was chosen in preference to the notion of a *Monde Peul* (Fulani World). The reason for this was explained thus, 'nous utilisons plutôt la métaphore de l'archipel que celle d'un monde dont on pourrait dessiner la périphérie' (Botte & Schmitz 1994: 15).

### Demographic Dilemmas

Not only are the Fulani widely scattered, they are also one of the most numerous of West African populations.<sup>53</sup> In reality, the quality and quantity of census information pertaining to Fulani populations in Africa vary widely. This is

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<sup>52</sup> The Tukulor are a case in point, as are the Tadrar and Halpular, the Fulakunda, Khassonke, Wassulonke, and Fellata (Frantz 1993: 23).

<sup>53</sup> However, as Frantz points out there has never been an attempt to calculate the numbers of Fulani in Africa, either recently or at any time in the past (Frantz 1993: 14).

obviously closely related to the notion of nominal definitions of the Fulani. These vary enormously depending upon what criteria are used. In 1959 Stenning estimated that there were over six million Fulani. Dupire in 1970 also gave a figure of six million. Then in 1981 she wrote that there were approximately seven million of them. In 1977 Riesman said that there were some nine million living between the Atlantic Ocean and Cameroon. The following year Weekes and Hopen, quoted by Frantz (1993: 15), gave figures of twelve and nineteen to twenty million respectively. Other recent estimates claim that there are more than fifteen million speakers of Fulfulde (Azarya et al. 1993). Hagberg notes that the various contemporary estimates claim between ten and thirty million Fulani (Hagberg 1998: 128).

Not only are the numbers of Fulani hard to gauge but Frantz (1993: 15) argues that the numbers of Fulani have decreased as well as increased through time in different regions. This is because Fulani have been 'lost' by becoming assimilated into other cultures, such as is the case in Sudan,<sup>54</sup> or their numbers have increased through military conquest. Clearly, the estimated numbers of Fulani depend upon the criteria used to 'define' who is and who is not Fulani. As the following section shows, the definition of Fulani is far from evident.

### **Who are the Fulani? : Contested criteria**

Any attempt to state something general about Fulbe is a risky enterprise.

(Hagberg 1998: 149)

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<sup>54</sup> 'By the end of the nineteenth century, most Fulbe who had migrated to the Sennar area had been absorbed into Sudan Arabic society' (Frantz 1993: 15).

In association with their wide distribution, over the centuries, significant differences have emerged among and between Fulani sub-groups. The problem was posed by Schultz who asked,

What can be the connection between scattered bands of nomadic or semi-nomadic herders who are few in number, lacking in power, and widely believed to be "pagan"; and urbane, sedentary Muslims - clerics, traders, rulers - who may own cattle, but who do not herd?

(Schultz 1980: x)

Within states also there are differences, in Nigeria for example the Fulani do not consider themselves a homogeneous group of people. They are invariably identified by their location, for example, 'Fulanin Yola', 'Fulanin Jos', or 'Fulanin Katsina' (Moses 1996: 25).

The criteria singled out as representing the core markers of Fulani ethnic identity in the various locations vary widely. However, an important question that needs to be borne in mind is whether the criteria in each case are emically or etically constructed, whether others choose to decide or the Fulani communities decide for themselves, who are and are not Fulani. Fulani groups vary greatly in important characteristics such as,

whether they speak Fulfulde as their first and/or only language; are nomadic or sedentary; are urban or rural: gain their livelihood principally by rearing livestock or crops (or both together), or through non-agricultural occupations; are politically dominant over other ethnic groups; are hierarchical/stratified or egalitarian/unstratified; depend on ex-slaves, ex-serfs, and on non-Fulbe individuals for labour; are guided mainly by Islam with respect to marriage and inheritance; and differ biologically, both genetically and in outward appearance, from neighbouring communities.

(Frantz 1993: 12)

These differences have emerged to such an extent that some argue that the Fulani no longer, '...constitute a single ethnic group, as an empirical reality or in the



perceptions of the people themselves...' (Azarya et al 1983: 1).<sup>55</sup> Amselle (1998: 46) for instance is of the opinion that, '...as many meanings of the term Fulani exist as there are actual expressions of a Fulani essence'. Meanwhile, Riesman (1984), as we saw in Chapter One, believes that,

A Fulani has no feeling for the Fulani as an ethnic group, but he has pride in himself because he can uphold the standard he was given by being born a Fulani.

(Riesman 1984: 180)

Frantz (1993) notes that Paden in a study of the Hausa-Fulani city of Kano identified eight categories of ethnic identification. In a similar study of Sokoto, Hendrixson identified twenty criteria by which residents defined themselves and others. Burnham (1991), on the other hand, referring to the Fulani of Meiganga in Northern Cameroon believes,

Il n'est pas difficile d'être admis au sein de la société foulbé; il suffit qu'un individu se qualifie sur trois choses: la langue, la religion (islam), un consensus déclaré aux idéaux peuls d'ethnicité et de supériorité en accord avec le pulaaku (Burnham 1991 : 79).<sup>56</sup>

Zubko (1993: 203) for his part recognizes five factors which constitute the, 'Fulbe cultural type', namely *pulaaku*, 'ethnic behavioural model',<sup>57</sup> nomadic cattle breeding type economy, Fula language, oral traditions and mythology (Zubko 1993: 203). Ayisi postulates that there is only one unifying factor,

One thing that all Fulbe have in common, no matter where they are located, is their sense of asymmetrical status consciousness in relation

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<sup>55</sup> Over the centuries many Fulfulde-speaking groups have changed considerably, to such an extent that some have assumed new ethnic identities, e.g. Tukurur, Tukulor, Halpular, Fulakunda (Frantz 1993:23).

<sup>56</sup> It is not difficult to be admitted into the bosom of Fulani society. It suffices that an individual qualifies on three points: language, religion (Islam), a declared agreement with Fulani ideals of ethnicity and superiority in accordance with *Pulaaku* (Translation of Burnham 1991 : 79).

<sup>57</sup> '[The] ethnic behaviour model...fixes the type of relations between the Fulbe ethnoses and the environment as well as the type of Fulbe ethnoses' relations with other ethnoses' (Zubko 1993: 201).

to their neighbours who are non-Fulbe...The Fulbe may be sedentary Muslims or pastoral nomads; they may be aristocrats or cattle herders, but they claim and believe implicitly in a common (blue-blood) consanguinity.

(Ayisi 1980: 155)

Two major factors are equated with the Fulani in the introduction to the Senri Ethnological Studies publication entitled *Unity and Diversity of a People: The Search For Fulbe Identity*, namely '...*pulaaku* and Fulfulde are perhaps the major identifying criteria of the Fulbe' (Azarya, Eguchi and VerEecke 1993: 3).

In the majority of definitions offered, mention is usually made of one or more of the following characteristics: language, racial (biological) traits, cattle-dependency, the sharing of a common ethical code (*pulaaku*), and adherence to Islam (Frantz 1993: 22). Various of these 'core' markers will now be discussed in order to highlight the underlying unifying factors that still enable the category 'Fulani' to be of relevance as an ethnic label in contemporary West African discourse. Thus the question being asked is: What elements constitute a notion or notions of Fulani ethnic identity?

### Language

The language of the Fulani is given various names in different circumstances: Fulfulde, Pulaar, Fula, Peul.<sup>58</sup> Despite their extensive geographical dispersal, Arnott notes that,

Linguistically there is no difficulty in describing the speech of the Fulani Diaspora as a single language, having a common basic morphological and syntactical structure and a common lexical stock

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<sup>58</sup> These differences are present in the terms the people themselves give to their language. In Senegal they refer to it as Pulaar, in Guinea as Pular from Mali eastwards it is known as Fulfulde. As Arnott (1970) pointed out the common factor in all of these appellations is the stem Ful-. German writers tend to use simply the stem Ful to designate both the people and the language whilst the French have used Peul (Peulh).

which is surprisingly large and uniform, considering the geographical spread and the variety of other linguistic groups with which the Fulani have been in close contact.

(Arnott 1970: 3)

There are however marked dialectal differences in the Fulani language, although all dialects are mutually intelligible. Groups living relatively near to one another have little or no difficulty in understanding each other. Even Fulani as far apart as Guinea, Senegal and Nigeria can communicate, 'given a certain degree of intelligence and a brief period of adjustment' (Arnott 1970: 3). Dupire disagrees and argues that often a translation is needed (particularly between groups of the east and west), given the fact that the various dialects of Fulfulde are greatly influenced by the languages of the neighbouring groups (Dupire 1981: 167).

According to Azarya (1993) the main dialects are Futa Djallon (Guinea), Futa Toro (Senegal), Massina (Mali), and Adamawa. 'These dialectal differences provide Fulfulde speakers with a kind of sub-identity' (Azarya et al. 1993: 8). Arnott however includes a further two dialects. He distinguishes the dialects of 'central' northern Nigeria and eastern Nigeria from that of Sokoto and western Niger. In defining the dialectal areas Arnott did however confess that the, 'demarcation of dialects is inevitable an arbitrary process' (Arnott 1970). All Fulfulde speakers should then in fact speak a variant of one or a combination of the above dialects. Thus, as regards language, regional dialectal differences exist. Borrowing words from local host languages is also a common phenomenon.

However, not all people who describe themselves as Fulani speak Fulfulde, just as some non-Fulani speak the language. Boutrais (1994:137) highlights this discrepancy by emphasizing two cases. Firstly are the instances where peoples who identify themselves as Fulani no longer utilize or have completely forgotten their language. He gives the examples of the Fulani of Northern Nigeria and the Fellata of Sudan and Chad. The extreme cases include peoples who have probably never used the Fulani language such as the, Fulani of

'Wasolan' in Mali (Boutrais 1994:138). In this example, their identity as Fulani results from an ancient ethnic conversion.

The inverse of this is also apparent. In other words there are a few examples of people appropriating the Fulani language and ceasing to speak their original language, such as the case of former slaves, an example being the 'Fouladu' of Senegal (Boutrais 1994a: 138). There are also instances where the Fulani language acquires the status of a vehicular language (Diamaré and Adamawa in Cameroon). The extreme case is that of a population, who although speaking the same language as the Fulani, regard themselves as distinct from them. A classic case of this are the Halpular and Tukulor of Senegal (Boutrais 1994a: 138). ?

### Myths of origin

According to Awogbade (1983: 1), 'if there is any bond shared by all Fulani, it is their myth of origin'. However, the issue is not quite so clear cut, and the question of the origins of the Fulani is the subject of much speculation and contested debate. No one knows with any certainty the origin of the Fulani (Scott 1984: 53). Nevertheless there has been no lack of theories, ranging from the 'tenable to the fantastic'(Scott 1984). Some writers have suggested their Jewish or Syrian origins. (Several such myths of origin were collected during the course of fieldwork, see Appendix IV.) Others still, have included suggestions of Ethiopian affinities. North African Berbers, Hindu, Malayo-Polynesian and Gypsy origins have been included in these obscure theories (Stenning 1959: 19).

The myths of the Fulani themselves often describe the marriage of a Muslim Arab or Moor with a black African lady, a marriage which is blessed with children. This Arabic-African origin is said to be the reason for their relatively light skin and strong adherence to Islam, amongst other things. The most popular

contemporary theory postulates an eastwards migration from their putative tenth-century homeland in Senegambia.<sup>59</sup> Linguistic evidence supports this hypothesis. Greenberg (1949), cited in Murdock (1959), notes that the Fulani language is closely related to the Sin dialect of Serer and almost as closely to Wolof. Apart from the Fulani all other speakers of this group of languages reside in the Senegambian area and its hinterland around the Atlantic Coast (Murdock 1959: 415). Fulfulde is thus classified as belonging to the West Atlantic group of Sudanic languages (Stenning 1959: 3). The 'true' origins of the Fulani are therefore likely to be in present day Senegal.

### Physical characteristics

Fascination with Fulani physical appearance is a prominent feature of the literature, both past and present. Early travel reports indicated that they were 'European like' in appearance (Williams 1988: 363).<sup>60</sup> Dupire goes so far as to include a table of comparative measurable phenotypes, and a photograph of a group of Wodaabe men, pointing out those who most resemble 'leur type ideal' (Dupire 1962: 48). In fact she devotes the first part of her introduction in her massive monograph *Peuls Nomades* to the 'Caracterès physiques des peules'.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile Stenning wrote:

The Fulani are not basically of Negro stock<sup>62</sup> ...Whatever their observed physical characteristics, Fulani communities in general recognize as an ideal the distinctive characteristics of the purest of the

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<sup>59</sup> Their gradual spread over many centuries was generally through migratory drift (Stenning 1959), although it was sometimes associated with Islamic holy wars (*Jihad*).

<sup>60</sup> Williams posits that underlying these reports was a 'fundamental mythic element expressed in a "white-black" dichotomy' (Williams 1988: 363).

<sup>61</sup> Fulani physical characteristics.

<sup>62</sup> While the belief that the Fulani are not basically of 'Negro stock' begs outmoded categories, this quotation does however illustrate the physical distinctiveness which has been attributed to the Fulani.

stock: light copper coloured skin, straight hair, narrow nose, thin lips, and slight bone structure.

(Stenning 1959: 2)

This interest in physical appearance is not only a concern of the various authors but also of the Fulani themselves (Dupire 1981: 168).<sup>63</sup> In the Fulani language the word *haabe* (singular *Kaado*) is used to designate all non-Fulani, the 'black' African populations amongst whom they live. It is also noted in the literature that they like to compare themselves with the,

...grands nomades blancs conquérants qui les entourent, les Touaregs à l'est et les Maures à l'ouest, auxels les pasteurs empruntent volontiers certains objets de leur artisanat.

(Dupire 1981: 168)

It is also a common feature of the literature to associate lighter skinned Fulani with the 'true' nomads, the Wodaabe or Bororo, and darker skinned Fulani to settled urbanized, Muslim groups.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Many of my Fulani female friends and respondents took great pride in their appearance and physical beauty. Note the fact that skin bleaching was quite common among the Fulani women, young and old. See the case study in Chapter Seven entitled, 'Coke and Fanta'.

<sup>64</sup> 'One thing that did change...was the colour of their skin, which became much darker following intermarriage with, and especially taking concubines among, non-Fulbe women' (Azarya 1993: 42).

### Livelihood

There is a need for historical depth as well as geographical breadth in order to untangle the web of differences in modes of subsistence, degree of mobility, group composition, economic and political organization, 'and to some extent world view' (Azarya, Eguchi, VerEecke 1993: 4). The Fulani are associated with pastoralism throughout West Africa.<sup>65</sup> Other ethnic groups associate them with it, as do Fulani themselves, even those who are not by occupation pastoralists. This is illustrated by the symbols of the cowherd following his cow on the banners during the parade (see Chapter One).

In very basic terms, the major stereotypical distinctions between different groups of Fulani are bush Fulani (*Fulbe ladde*) versus town Fulani (*Fulbe saare*)<sup>66</sup> in the west, and Mbororo versus Pullo in the east (Hagberg 1998: 130). This opposition however fails to take into account the various social hierarchies, based upon slavery, evident in most Fulani populations. Fulbe, free-persons *rimbe*, are associated with pastoralism and Islamic scholarship, and *maccube*, captives, are those captured in wars and slave raids. In some areas, another category is important, that of the *rimaybe*.<sup>67</sup> These are slaves born into slavery but who could not themselves be sold (Hagberg 1998: 130).

Among some Fulani groups, there are 'casted' peoples *nyeenybe*, whose professions include, blacksmiths, bards, leatherworkers, woodworkers and musicians (endogamous artisan and musician groups). The Fulani are one of only fifteen or so West African peoples to have endogamous artisan groups, which can be described as castes. Moreover, Fulfulde is one of only four West African

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<sup>65</sup> 'La réputation des Peuls est dans toute L'Afrique celle de bergers. Meme lorsqu'ils se sont sédentaires' (Dupire 1962: 82).

<sup>66</sup> Another way of expressing this dichotomy is *Fulbe na'i* (Cow Fulani) and *Fulbe wuro* (urban Fulani).

<sup>67</sup> The difference and distinction between the *maccube* on the one hand and the *rimaybe* on the other is not always evident and would appear to be more relevant in some regions than other. In Ghana the term, and social category, *maccube* was universally recognized and will be used throughout.

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languages in which there exists an indigenous word for such caste groups (Conrad & Frank 1995).

To a certain extent, these different 'levels' (socio-cultural statuses) affect the occupations that individuals can and do engage in. The free-slave division is the greatest determinant of occupation. This was perhaps more so in the past than now. Slaves for example were used in the cultivation of land as well as cattle herding (Azarya 1993: 46). Being a butcher is an occupation that is anathema to many free-born Fulani who avoid it and leave it to those of slave origin (Hino 1993: 67).

Some Fulani populations, are more involved in pastoralism than others. If regarded in terms of a continuum,<sup>68</sup> it becomes apparent that a whole series of pastoral livelihoods can be differentiated <sup>69</sup>. At one end of this 'continuum' are the nomadic pastoralists, the Mbororo, Wodaabe. They are only a small percentage of Pastoral Fulani.<sup>70</sup> Semi-sedentary (semi-nomadic) pastoralists are frequently distinguished as another group. Others are termed transhumant, migrating seasonally. Yet others still are sedentary. To categorize different Fulani populations in terms of the above criteria can be misleading, as it overlooks the dynamism involved. For instance the sedentarization of former nomadic pastoralists, through 'excessive poverty and excessive wealth' (Azarya 1993: 35), is ignored. Moreover the categories are often discussed in the literature, as though they are fixed and immutable.

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<sup>68</sup> The notion of a continuum is widely adopted in the literature, and while problematic in that it seems to imply a staged or staggered notion of pastoralism, it is useful as a conceptual tool.

<sup>69</sup> Hopen distinguished what he termed 'sub-cultures' of Fulani. These he called *Bororo'en* ('pure' pastoralists), *Fulbe n'ai* (cattle Fulbe), *Fulbe siire* (town Fulbe), and *Toroobe* (local non-pastoral, aristocratic ruling clan Fulbe) (Hopen 1958). Stenning divided up the Fulani into Pastoral Fulani, Semi-Sedentary and Sedentary (Stenning 1959).

<sup>70</sup> Nomadic Fulani are also undoubtedly the most romanticised section of Fulani society, with lavish photo essays such as Carol Beckwith's doing little to eradicate the stereotypic notions of superstitious, brave, joyful, wandering nomads (Beckwith 1983).



While many authors as well as Fulani themselves attest to a deep seated disdain for agriculture as an occupation, Azarya (1993: 38) notes that part-time agriculture is carried out by 'most' Fulani families. The readiness with which individuals adapt to circumstances and engage in different forms of economic activity and livelihood will be evident from the case studies presented below.

Overlooked in the literature also are the important differences in social organization between populations which are categorized within the same 'type of pastoral livelihood'. In a study of 'Ecology and social organization among Nigerian Fulbe', Frantz documented the important differences in social organization, due to different political, economic and religious developments among pastoralists living in very similar physical environments and with close cultural ties in northeastern Nigeria (Frantz 1978).

Then of course there are the 'non-pastoral Fulani', who could include people involved in any number of possible activities. However the most commonly cited occupations include Islamic teachers and rulers. This category is concerned with urbanized peoples. An interesting insight into the ways in which these differences have been conceptualized is presented in Murdock (1959: 414). He perceived two distinct 'groups' of Fulani. The first comprises bronze complexioned pastoral nomads, seen as being indifferent Muslims, and the second darker skinned, sedentary Muslims.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Characteristics of Contrasting Fulani Groups  
A Fulani

- Non-Negroid in physique: 'straight-nosed, straight-haired, relatively thin-lipped, wiry, coppery-or-bronze complexioned'.
- Pastoral nomads.
- Indifferent Muslims and not infrequently even pagans.
- Peaceful herders, readily accommodating to their neighbours.
- Lacking any indigenous political organization above the level of the autonomous band and its headman.

- B Fulani
- Strongly Negroid, though often displaying some admixture of other ethnic elements.
  - Sedentary village dwellers.
  - Fanatic Muslims committed to proselytizing their faith.
  - Aggressive addicts of 'holy wars' against pagan peoples.
  - Noted state builders through wars of conquest and aggrandizement.

A conspicuous difference between Fulani populations is evident in terms of their political power and influence at the local and regional levels. At one extreme, populations in states such as Ghana and Benin (Bierschenk & Le Meur 1997) have little or no power at the national and local levels. Indeed they are in some circumstances scapegoats for local and even national grievances.<sup>72</sup> At the other extreme they form the ruling elite. This is the situation that pertains in Northern Nigeria and parts of Cameroon.

Several key factors help to explain this diversity. An obvious one is the percentage of a nation's population which is Fulani. Related to this is the degree to which people are spatially concentrated or dispersed. The third and in many ways most important variable is the extent to which (at the time of European conquest), the Fulani were pastoralists, living in dispersed and egalitarian households, or were rulers/conquerors, and hence mostly sedentary and hierarchical (Frantz 1993: 18).

Pastoralism in West Africa is not the preserve of the Fulani, there are of course some non-Fulani ethnic groups who own or look after cattle. In fact in Ghana three ethnic groups in particular have a marked tendency to own cattle and to have Fulani serve as their cattle herders, the Tallensi and Dagomba in northern Ghana and the Ga in the south (Frantz 1993: 20; C. Oppong 1973: 19).

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<sup>72</sup>. For example as noted above (footnote 45) in 1969, after the Government of Ghana implemented an 'Aliens Compliance Order', 'probably around 200,000 people left the country in the space of two weeks' (Eades 1993: 1).

Another spectacular occasion in which the Fulani in particular were targeted was that of 'Operation Cow Leg' and 'Operation livestock solidarity' launched in 1988 by the Ghanaian government in order to expel Fulani said to be illegally occupying local lands (Tonah 1993: 131-132). Tonah labels these Fulani specific dictates an 'anti-nomadic era'.

*Pulaaku*

In much of the literature about the pastoral Fulani emphasis is made of the notion of '*laawol pulaaku*' (the Fulani way). As Kirk-Greene wrote:

Prominent among pastoral Fulani...is the delimiting notion of being a Fulani. This represents both a sign of ethnic identification and a sense of social coherence. Whether such a perception is inherent in being born a Fulani or whether it has an element of conscious role-playing by the Fulani is a matter of argument.

(Kirk-Greene 1986: 41)

Riesman claims that *pulaaku* is equivalent to the English word 'chivalry' (Riesman 1977: 129). However the notion of chivalry is heavily gendered and as such inappropriate, for it emphasizes aspects other than those specified by the notion of *pulaaku*. VerEecke (1988: viii) sees *pulaaku* as containing a broad array of 'contextually relevant meanings'; as embodying the Fulani's 'world view' and as providing a template for appropriate behaviour and for interpreting everyday experience. Elsewhere, she equates *pulaaku* with Fulani 'culture' (VerEecke 1993: 141).

It would appear that *pulaaku* differs from region to region (Azarya, Eguchi and VerEecke 1993: 5). While some authors believe that it doesn't exist in certain regions (Shimada 1993: 95), others contend that it is fundamental and universally found among all Fulani groups (Ogawa 1993: 129).

Stenning, identifies and distinguishes four significant components of *pulaaku* in Northern Nigeria. These are firstly Fulfulde, the Fulani language,<sup>73</sup> secondly modesty and reserve (*seemteende*); thirdly, patience and fortitude

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<sup>73</sup> 'Fulfulde means not only the language spoken by Fulani, but the whole range of rights and duties peculiar to a pullo' (Stenning 1959).

(*munyal*), and lastly care and forethought, (*hakkiilo*) (Stenning 1959).<sup>74</sup> He explained that within the family, it was first the mother and later the father who inculcated the virtues of *pulaaku*. It was considered that *pulaaku* was taught by example, and if successful, makes the family group a tightly knit independent economic unit (Stenning 1959: 55). Dupire recognizes four components, namely *munyal*, *hakkiilo*, *seemteende* and another *ciusal*, courage. In Adamawa, VerEecke notes that the most commonly cited components of *pulaaku*, (especially for the pastoral, nominally Islamic Fulani) include *seemteende*, *munyal*, *ngoru* (bravery), *ngaynaaku* (herdsmanship), *ndimaaku* (freedom), *endam* (kindness) and *caachu* (generosity).

Ogawa (1993: 129) postulates that *pulaaku* is not simply a value system by itself but is rather a system of ideas or symbols, defined in contrast with and in relation to *other* peoples or cultures. The concept of shame, *seemteende*, is a case in point. One can only feel shame in the presence of others. VerEecke (1993b: 147) is also of the opinion, '*Pulaaku* by itself is believed to be a boundary between Fulbe and non-Fulbe'.

Amselle (1998: 44), on the other hand, does not believe that these values (resignation, intelligence, courage, reserve) are unique to the Fulani, but that rather, 'These values characterize all aristocratic West African societies, whether sedentary or nomadic'. Others (Ogawa et al. 1993: 3) believe that *pulaaku* is the central marker of Fulani identity and unique to them.

*Pulaaku* is apparently a dynamic concept, capable of adapting to various conditions and changes to which Fulani have been exposed over time. Amongst pastoral Fulani, it has always included behavioural and character prescriptions regarding herdsmanship. During the jihads, of the eighteenth and nineteenth

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<sup>74</sup> In my various discussion on the nature and qualities of *pulaaku* among numerous different individuals in Greater Accra, while many people talked in terms of the types of behaviour appropriate to a Fulani, only one person, an elder from Burkina Faso used the terms: *seemteende*, *munyal*, *hakkiilo* to specify the elements of *pulaaku*.

centuries, it prescribed behaviour relating to battle, such as bravery and courage, as well as religious qualities, such as piety (Azarya, Eguchi, VerEecke 1993: 4).

In recent years VerEecke (1993b) has illustrated the dynamism of *pulaaku*. She writes of the resurgence of a kind of Fulani pride in the guise of *pulaaku* in Nigeria. She sees this resurgence as an, 'adaptation to the harsh political and economic realities which...Nigerian citizens now face' (VerEecke 1993b: 139). *Pulaaku* will be reconsidered throughout this thesis, (e.g. see Chapter Five Socialization, Training and Education).

### Islam

In discussions of identity it is not uncommon to encounter arguments suggesting that the more the Fulani become immersed in Islam, the more that they forget about *pulaaku* and identify themselves as part of the larger Islamic community (Ogawa 1993: 119). VerEecke, in a discussion of the Adamawa Fulani identity, puts forward the view that Islam has increasingly become more important, both as moral code and an ethnic marker, than *pulaaku*. The core elements of Islam, in particular, the Five Pillars of Islam, are seen to resemble and compliment *pulaaku*. She notes that in Adamawa, individuals and sometimes whole communities make little distinction between *pulaaku* and Islam. In fact, many consider *diina* (Islam) a component of *pulaaku* (VerEecke 1993b: 148). Frantz goes so far as to suggest that not only will *pulaaku* as a distinctive marker of Fulani identity disappear, but,

If the great Islamic/Arabic tradition continues to spread, the distinctive qualities of behaviour and thought now called 'Fulbe' are likely to disappear or to be redefined in some larger or trans-ethnic identity.

(Frantz 1993: 23)

Religion?

## Survival, viability & adaptation

The general mass movement of Fulani appears to have started about the eleventh century in Senegal, and to have taken place eastwards.

(Stenning 1965: 367)

The history of the Fulani in West Africa is one of migration. The most widely accepted view is that they have spread eastwards from their putative homeland in the Futa Toro region of present day Senegal, which they began to leave by the tenth or eleventh centuries (Newman 1985: 130 and Stenning 1965: 367 respectively). Fulani tended to move along river valleys where grass and water were more abundant. The main impetus for their movement was provided by the pastoral Fulani, whose traditional transhumance systems were constantly adjusted to prevailing climatic and micro-ecological conditions. This movement far from being random and unrestrained, was rather 'conservative', involving movements in relatively small and restricted grazing lands, 'by continuous adjustment...to subtle ecological changes' (Stenning 1965: 367).

Gradually the orbits of transhumance have been expanded and new territories have been exploited for grazing, leading to the systematic drift of the pastoral Fulani eastwards across the sub-continent from the Senegal valley (Curtin 1994: 12). 'Migratory drift' is the term that Stenning (1957) used to describe the resultant transhumance movements. By the fifteenth century Fulani were living in sizeable numbers in Hausaland. Three hundred years later they were in Darfur (Newman 1995: 130). Frantz believes that the Fulani have spread into twenty nations including Ethiopia and Kenya (1993: 17). Fulani movements into new territories and states continue at the present time. The existence of a sizeable Fulani population in Ghana is evidence of this continuous movement. Fulani in Ghana testified to knowing of Fulani pastoralists and sizeable, settled communities in countries as far apart as Libya and Zambia.

Various forms of Fulani movement have occurred over time, precipitated by factors other than pastoralism. Deliberate large scale migrations across huge tracts of land also took place in relation to the spread of Islam. They are believed to have been converted to Islam before the eleventh century in Senegal. The Fulani holy men (*moodibe*) themselves moved eastwards proselytizing as they went. The efforts of these men led to the establishment of dispersed religious brotherhoods, 'in which Fulani ethnic feeling and language had a strong place. This ethnic feeling and wide dissemination of Fulani communities supported the development of the Fulani Muslim states' (Stenning 1965: 368).

The importance of the Fulani factor in the spread of Islam in West Africa cannot be denied, and today nearly all Fulani are Muslim. Every Fulani Jihad,<sup>75</sup> which resulted in theocratic state formation, began in the regions where pastoral Fulani were numerous. These included riverain zones along the Senegal river (Futa Toro), the Niger river (Massina), and the Sokoto and Komadugu rivers (Sokoto), and on the Futa Djallon and Adamawa plateaux (Shimada 1993: 89).

A generalizable feature of the adoption and spread of Islam by the Fulani and a corollary of successful jihads was that Fulani families were able to employ others, captured in wars, to herd their cattle permanently and cultivate the land. The Fulani themselves tended to settle and occupied themselves with religious and political activities. This process was generalized in the new states, as many Fulani became part of a ruling aristocracy and achieved control of land and slaves (Azarya 1993: 46).<sup>76</sup>

By contrast, those Fulani not involved in state formation, and who as a result did not gain a share of its spoils, were less tempted to forsake their nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life. Some were employed as herders for the settled Fulani. Others continued their pastoral practices on the margins of the state. Thus

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<sup>75</sup> Not all jihad movements were led by Fulani, nor were all successful.

<sup>76</sup> Only in Futa Toro, following the Jihad did a slave-based economy fail to develop. (Azarya 1993). This is not the view of the author.

a sharper distinction emerged between the settled Fulani, (characterized as more devout Muslims and well integrated in the new political systems), and the, 'less Muslim, less negroid nomadic pastoralists organized in loose segmentary units' (Azarya 1993: 46).

For centuries, Fulani and other peoples have transported cattle throughout West Africa for sale. Kano in Northern Nigeria represents the biggest commercial cattle centre in West Africa (Church 1980: 129). Daily, cattle-trains and trucks leave Kano and other similar commercial cattle-centres for the south of Nigeria and to other parts of the sub-region. Many more herds of cattle are driven on foot, in journeys taking as long as three months. Some of the older men interviewed for this study had originally come to Ghana in this fashion.

It has already been demonstrated (in the previous section on West Africa) how drought, disease and other disastrous situations have forced peoples (Fulani included) to move (today and in the past). Riesman (1984: 182) is one of those who reasons that Fulani mobility in and of itself is a survival strategy, it is a 'basic adaptation'. He notes, that it is such a successful adaptation that it is often applied to a multitude of difficult situations and stresses, including famine, family conflict, population pressure, political struggles and war. As I previously quoted at length, (p.27)

From our Western perspective we might be tempted to think the Fulani are always 'running away' from their problems, rather than facing them. For the kinds of problems the Fulani face, however, leaving a place and striking out on one's own can be a true solution.

(Riesman 1984: 182)

Migration and movement in and of itself can be viewed as an 'adaptation', a survival strategy, to ensure continuity of the Fulani people and their way of life, in a variety of changing and frequently precarious, socio-political and ecological environments. In historical terms, this adaptation has clearly been successful for

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the Fulani throughout West Africa. This is attested to by their survival in diverse social and cultural systems, as well as their successful and innovative adaptation to the opportunities and constraints encountered in disparate Fulani biophysical and socio-cultural environments (Frantz 1986: 16).

Stenning (1962) introduced the notion of 'viability' in relation to the Wodaabe Pastoral Fulani of Northern Nigeria. He documented the balance required between human and animal needs and size, necessary to ensure the development and ultimate survival of both at the household level. Despite the fact that the Fulani of Greater Accra are not nomadic pastoralists and are not from one cultural or ecological niche (in the same way as the group Stenning studied were), this notion of 'viability' is nevertheless a useful analytical tool for discussing Fulani movement, survival and identity in Accra today.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The use of the term viability is not being used in a strictly functionalist way. It does not here denote the strict balance between herd and family size. There are other senses in which pastoral peoples can maintain their viability. One such example is expressed by Burnham (1980: 166) below:

'...although certain parts of the West African Savannas are being denied to full-time pastoralists, a contrary process has emerged which encourages the continued existence of pastoral groups with herd sizes below the usual minimum for full-time pastoralism. This process is based on the growing differential between cattle prices and grain prices, the former increasing much more rapidly than the latter due to cattle demand being more closely linked with the inflationary forces operative in urban and international markets...Consequently, marginal pastoral systems have clearly become more viable, particularly in light of the fact that the sale of cattle is now practiced by most Fulani groups. In these conditions, the traditional close relationship between herd size and family size in Fulani society, which was so well described by Stenning (1959: 100-72), is no longer apparent in many Fulani groups' (Burnham 1980: 166).

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Fulani in Greater Accra: Following cows & forgetting home**

#### **Ghana**

Sidiq told me that the following incident occurred, one evening, when he was eight years old,:-

‘[I went to] follow the cows to bush...and I met my father [on the road, and my father said to me where have you been? and I said] father today I follow my cow to bush. My father was happy and pointed to one cow [and gave it to me]’.

In many ways cattle are a symbol/marker of Fulani ethnic identity.<sup>78</sup> Many individuals, who have never in their lives been directly associated with cattle, will refer to them being part of their heritage and identity. Very often, cattle form a part of the narratives that various individuals tell regarding their presence in Ghana. Some of the older men among those interviewed had followed herds of cattle on foot to Ghana. Ghanaian born Fulani sometimes situate themselves, historically and socially, by recounting the tales their fathers and grandfathers told them of these journeys, or by explaining how they first came to own cattle, as Sidiq does in the above quotation.

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<sup>78</sup> See Chapter Six, *Suudu-Baaba* and Chapter Seven, ‘Performance’, for discussions on the use of cattle as symbols on membership cards and emblems of Fulani Ethnic Associations.

While pastoralism in general, and herding cattle in particular, are more of a feature of rural based individuals, urban dwellers and those living in peri-urban environments, often have links with the rural areas and cattle-raising. Individuals, especially men, who may be working at the present time in an urban-based setting and urban occupation, may have herded cattle in their youth. Many of the stories of mobility and relocation in Ghana and beyond involved cattle in some capacity, either directly or indirectly. Cattle work, whether herding or trading, necessarily involves movement and mobility. Therefore in many ways, 'following' and 'cows' necessarily go together.

The notion of 'following cows' (as a metaphor for mobility) necessarily implies a fluid and ongoing venture. One does not follow one's cows from location 'A' to location 'B' and then remain stationary. Very often the plans and intentions of an individual, as they leave one place to look for another, are modified in the very process of moving. The reasons people move and the extent (temporal and spatial) of such movement are varied, as will be seen. Although the stories of movement and mobility recounted were very often told from the point of view of a single individual - the narrator - the contexts within which these movements took place were often broader and involved kin, affines and friends. Not only are all stories necessarily told within a broader social context, but temporally these movements are often long and drawn out affairs. Their implications may be played out for the rest of an individual's career, as well as affecting the lives of subsequent generations (Castles & Miller 1998: 19).

Over the course of an individual's lifetime s/he may have many different homes both simultaneously and consecutively. These homes may be located in the same spatial setting or may be thousands of kilometres apart. Physical presence is not necessarily a prerequisite for feeling that a particular location is 'home', and the notion of home is a malleable and a contextual one.

This chapter uses the stories and perspectives of various individuals, young and old, female and male, to explore the ways in which people and families are spread out and split off from one another and how, in the context of Accra, they form ties and alliances. At a theoretical level, two competing and opposing factors can be seen at work in the lives of the Fulani in Greater Accra and indeed perhaps Fulani everywhere. This chapter is shaped by a consideration of these factors, - namely centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. In order to contextualize the present discussion, attention briefly turns to the historical nature of the Fulani presence in Ghana in general and Accra in particular.

Everybody in Ghana has an ethnic identity or multiple ethnic identities, to which they relate and with which they identify.<sup>79</sup> A person is either Ga or Ewe, an Akan, or Dagomba etc. or if one wants to be specific, an Ashanti or a Fanti. It is a given in Ghanaian society. One of the main indications that someone belongs to an ethnic category is an ability to speak the language. In fact the ability to speak a Ghanaian language is written into the constitution as a necessary prerequisite for citizenship.<sup>80</sup> The population of Ghana is made up of many different ethnic groups. However in numerical terms the most significant include the Akan (44%), Mole-Dagbani (16 %), Ewe (13%), Ga-Adangbe (8%), Gruma (4%), and Grussi (2%). A number of smaller groups make up the remainder of indigenous ethnic groups in the country.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of religious affiliation, according to the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS-3), nearly two thirds of households are headed by Christians, 14% by Muslims, 18% by practitioners of traditional religion or animists and 4% by

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<sup>79</sup> See, *The Patterns of Ethnicity in Ghana*, Price 1973.

<sup>80</sup> In the case of individuals applying to be registered as Ghanaian citizens, Article 9, clause 2 states:

Except as otherwise provided in article 7 of this constitution, a person shall not be registered as a citizen of Ghana unless at the time of his application for registration he is able to speak and understand an indigenous language of Ghana.

<sup>81</sup> Politically the country is divided into ten administrative regions: Greater Accra, Central, Western, Eastern, Volta, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West, See Map 2.1, p.38

adherents of a variety of smaller religious groups (cited in GDHS 1993: 1). The more than half of the population who are Christian are most numerous in the south of the country. The largest concentrations of Muslims and animists are found in the north.

There is in very broad terms a north/south divide in Ghana. The peoples of the northern regions fall into two main types, as regards their social organization - kingdoms and acephalous groups. This division cuts across linguistic affinities and geographical location. These basic differences affect such factors as traditional political organization, mode of kinship reckoning and the composition of domestic groups. A number of geographical, historical and social factors underlie the contrasts to be found between the north and the south of the country. These factors manifest themselves in different environmental conditions, patterns of religious adherence, levels of economic development etc.<sup>82</sup>

'Southern' Ghanaian groups, tend to associate Islamic peoples with 'the north' and also with the Hausa language and culture. Thus 'northerners' is the term used for the majority of Islamic peoples. Southern Ghanaians make very little distinction between those 'Northerners' who hail from Northern Ghana and those from beyond its borders. The sensitive and potentially volatile nature of the 'ethnic question' is indicated by the fact that the 1960 census of Ghana was the most recent census to seek information on the ethnic composition of the country. A special report 'E' entitled 'Tribes of Ghana' was published. None of the subsequent censuses has asked for ethnic group affiliation.

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<sup>82</sup> 'During the course of the twentieth century, it was the coastal and forest areas in the south which provided the economic core, while the savanna areas (which became the Northern Territories under colonial rule) became increasingly peripheral. However this was not always the case, in the nineteenth century this area had been of strategic importance in the economy of the Ashanti State. Its marginalization resulted from the collapse of the Ashanti economy after the British invasion of 1874, and the increasing redirection of trade towards the coast' (Eades 1993: 24).

The word 'alien', currently in common use in Ghana, in relation to non-Ghanaians was not used until the Aliens Compliance order of November 1969 (see Chapter Two). According to Peil, before the Compliance order:

...foreign Africans had been referred to as Wangara, Mossi, Lagosians (though only a small proportion of the Yoruba actually came from Lagos), Ewe (who could come from either side of the international border) and so on. Europeans...Asians, and Lebanese... were collectively called expatriates.

(Peil 1979: 129)

In contemporary Ghana, the word 'alien' has pejorative connotations. As the word implies, it is used to signify those who are somehow strange, different, 'other', foreign. It is a term used for stereotyping and when scapegoating people, - particularly those one does not like or know. Friend or workmate will be Zabarama or Hausa, Nigerien or Nigerian. An unknown individual who is perceived as a threat is an 'alien'. It is a term commonly used in the media (see Appendix II, News clippings). Aliens and citizens are at 'opposite ends of the legal-jural continuum, each has differential sets of rights, duties, and obligations' (Skinner 1979: 4). Ultimately it is the state which has the right to define the legal status and the related rights and duties of both aliens and citizens. The terms strangers and hosts however refer to social status. Strangers are not necessarily aliens.

### **Fulani in Ghana**

The Fulbe are found in small numbers throughout the country but are concentrated in the northern and south-eastern parts of the country.

(Tonah 1993: 127)

There is a dearth of information pertaining to the Fulani in Ghana. Numerically, they are a small minority, most of whom have migrated to Ghana from elsewhere in West Africa, or descendants of relatively recent immigrants. It can be assumed

that they are found in all regions of the country. Their name is synonymous with cattle rearing.

### Following cows...

The Fulani in Ghana have long been associated with cattle trade in which they still continue to specialize. According to Rouch (1956: 27), a customs post and veterinary services were established on the borders of Ghana as early as 1926. Until 1945, the majority of those bringing cattle into the country came on foot. Of all the groups of immigrants with whom Rouch was concerned in *Migrations au Ghana*, he notes that the Fulani were the least united and were the least likely to follow a specific itinerary on their cattle trade journey to Ghana. This lack of unity is not surprising, given the large number of different directions and territories that the Fulani come from. Following a herd of livestock on foot used to be a very common way in which many of the older men interviewed had first entered the country (see Shuhaibu's story in Chapter One).

The 1948 census of the area comprising modern day Ghana (The Colony, Ashanti and The Northern Territories) gave a total of 20,000 Fulani. Stenning (1959: 1) noted that there were approximately 5,500 Fulani in the Gold Coast. His source was the 1950 Population Census. Dupire (1980: 167) included Ghana in the list of fifteen countries in which the Fulani live, interestingly she omitted Côte d'Ivoire. By the census of 1960 there were apparently 25,050 Fulani in the country, making up 0.4 percent of the total population. A further 4,210 Fulani were classified as 'indigenous'.<sup>83</sup> A regional analysis of the spatial distribution of the Fulani in 1960 showed that the greatest concentration of Fulani was in the Northern Region of the country, - 6,010 men and 5,300 women. For the Accra Metropolitan area, the figures were 2,340 and 970 respectively. Thus region by

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<sup>83</sup> On what basis these Fulani were classified as indigenous has yet to be ascertained.

region, Accra was second to the North in terms of Fulani population. The only recent source of information found pertaining to the numbers of Fulani in Ghana claimed that there were 7,377 Fulfulde speakers in the country (Grimes 1996).<sup>84</sup>

In terms of religious affiliation, it was reckoned in the 1960 census that 91% of all Fulani were Muslim, 7.3% Traditional, 0.5 % Christian and that 0.5% had no religion. The same 1960 census also produced a list of occupations (Table s26 1960 Census Report, Special Report E, Tribes in Ghana).<sup>85</sup> The findings in relation to the Fulani are as follows. 11,340 men (68%) were included, while only 1,130 women (14%) were included in the occupations listed. The women were also found in a far narrower range of occupations. The majority were petty traders.<sup>86</sup>

The occupations of the men were far more diverse. The single biggest occupational group (as would be expected) was farmers and farm managers. These numbered 2,430. Under the heading farmers, fishermen, hunters, loggers and related workers were counted a total of 8,310 men. Large numbers of Fulani were also employed as craftsmen, production process workers and labourers. The largest single occupation in this category were tailors, who accounted for 380 individuals. Thus while in popular perception the Fulani in Ghana (and elsewhere

<sup>84</sup> No background was provided as to how the information was gathered, or indeed whether individuals who considered themselves Fulani but spoke no Fulfulde were enumerated.

<sup>85</sup> See also *The Occupations of Migrants in Ghana*, Hill 1970.

<sup>86</sup> A TABLE TO SHOW THE FULANI POPULATION IN GHANA (MALE AND FEMALE) BY REGION, 1960.

	MALE	FEMALE
ALL REGIONS	16,770	8,280
WESTERN	1,550	530
ACCRA	2,340	970
EASTERN	2,160	530
VOLTA	520	130
ASHANTI	2,920	610
BRONG-AHAFO	1,270	210
NORTHERN	6,010	5,300

Adapted from: 1960 Census Report. Special Report E. 'Tribes in Ghana'.



in West Africa) are predominantly pastoralists, in reality by 1960 they already occupied a wide range of occupations.

Perhaps the most comprehensive contemporary analysis to date of the Fulani presence in Ghana is provided by Tonah (1993). His work provides a detailed case study of the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and local agriculturalists in the Kassena-Nankani area of Northern Ghana. Tonah notes that,

It was commonly alleged in the Ghanaian media that, 'Fulbe pastoralists from all parts of West Africa were making Ghana their homeland, permanently occupying traditional lands, and attacking local residents'. Furthermore, the Fulbe were accused of destroying the environment wherever they settled by cutting down trees to feed stock. Movement of cattle by nomadic pastoralists across international borders was blamed for the reoccurrence of certain stock diseases in Northern Ghana.

(Tonah 1993: 130)

All over the world, migrant populations are stereotyped by their 'hosts'. The general Ghanaian stereotype of the Fulani is that they live in the North, raise cattle, and look after the herds of various local, 'Northern' peoples.<sup>87</sup> They are also portrayed in the press and in popular perception (as the above quotation illustrates) as cattle rustlers and the destroyers of crops, as dangerous and 'different' (see press clippings). This is obviously not the whole picture. Not all Fulani are living in the North. Not all of them are pastoralists and not all of them are dishonest. However, it is not too difficult to see why such stereotypes occur and why they are believed and perpetuated by some. For, in a very general sense, they are 'different', occupationally, phenotypically, linguistically, and in terms of religion, from the host communities of the South. However, wrong doings of a few individuals can be extended to taint perceptions of the whole population. Tonah noted this in the Kassena-Nankani district,

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<sup>87</sup> Many Fulani are of course living in this manner. See for example Abu 1990.

The Fulbe... claimed the entire group was being held responsible for offences committed by individual pastoralists with whom they had no relations and whose activities they could not control. They persistently rejected allegations that they were involved in cattle-rustling and pointed out that they were often on good terms with the local population wherever they settled.

(Tonah 1993: 131)

In the 1980s there was a marked increase in the tensions (real and perceived) between the Fulani and settled agriculturalists, especially in the north of the country. Tensions escalated to such an extent that nation-wide government programs code-named 'Operation cowleg' and 'Operation livestock solidarity' were launched by the Ghanaian government in April of 1988. According to Tonah a newspaper of the day (*Daily Graphic*, 16 April 1988) claimed that the aims of the 'Operations' were to '...flush out Fulbe pastoralists said to be illegally occupying local lands and ostensibly to check the spread of livestock diseases' (Tonah 1993: 132). This was the official policy. However at the district level, the level of implementation, things turned ugly. Many of the Fulbe pastoralists were allegedly uninformed and unaware of the operations and were unable to get their cattle across the borders in time. Those who were unable to meet the deadline had their stock seized by Animal Health and Production Department officials who, according to Tonah's sources, sold the confiscated stock to friends and commercial livestock farmers. Rumours of the supernatural powers of the Fulani were rife,

One of the livestock traders who used his contacts to purchase three heifers and a bull lamented that none of the heifers he purchased were fertile and believed the local rumour that Fulbe pastoralists had deliberately poisoned the heifers ...

(Tonah 1993: 132)

These 'anti-nomadic' policies by the government of Ghana and their direct intervention in Northern Ghana undoubtedly worsened the image of the Fulani in the eyes of many non-Fulani people in the country. However, the intended goal of preventing the spread of livestock diseases was not addressed, and the

beneficiaries were rather the 'stock rustlers and corrupt government officials in both Ghana and Burkina Faso' (Tonah 1993: 135).

## **Fulani in Accra**

### **Historical sources**

The region of Greater Accra is the smallest of the ten regions of Ghana. It is situated in the south-central part of the country. The coastline of this region stretches from Ada in the East to Kokrobite in the West. It covers an area of 3,245 kilometres square. The region is a predominantly low-lying undulating, coastal plain. It reaches heights scarcely over 75 metres above sea level. The Shai hills are in the Northeast and rise to about 300 metres. The vegetation is coastal savanna grassland. It is one of the few regions in the country where livestock can be reared. This is because of the grassland vegetation and the absence of tsetse fly.

Greater Accra has the highest population density of all Ghana's regions. In 1960, the population density of the region was 167 persons per square kilometre. By 1970 this had risen to 278, and in 1984 to 438 (cited in GDHS 1993). The high population and population density figures are due to the presence of the two large metropolitan areas of Accra and Tema. The administrative area of Greater Accra Region covers the Accra Metropolitan Area, Tema District, Dangme West District, Dangme East District and Ga District. Accra is the administrative capital of the region.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Each district has a district assembly which is the highest political and administrative authority in the district. At the head of the district is the district Secretary who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of government departments and organization of the district (Official Handbook of Ghana, 1991: 8).

An invaluable source of information on the historical context of the Fulani presence in Accra is provided by the Acquah (1958). In *Accra Survey* she presents a social survey of Accra on the basis of information gathered during the years 1953-1956. The area demarcated and delineated as Accra during this time period is obviously very different from the Accra of today. This is due to the increase in the demographic and geographic extent of the city in the intervening years. While the data are now somewhat dated, the survey is nevertheless worth closer inspection, as it furnishes us with unique quantitative data and provides a context for the situation of today.<sup>89</sup>

In comparing the available population figures of 1948 with the 1960 census figures, it becomes apparent that in the twelve intervening years, the total Fulani population of Accra more than tripled in size from 1,074 individuals to 3,310. An analysis of the sex ratio also reveals that while in 1948 there were twice as many Fulani men as women in Accra, by 1960 the disparity had widened and there were slightly less than three times as many men as women.<sup>90</sup>

In general terms Acquah notes that 'the stream of migrants into Accra flows mainly from French West African territory north of Ghana' (Acquah 1958: 35).<sup>91</sup> The general tendency was for more males than females to migrate (with a few exceptions). A correlation between the distance from Ghana that the ethnic groups migrated from and their sex ratio was also apparent from Acquah's data. In

<sup>89</sup> THE MALE AND FEMALE FULANI POPULATION OF ACCRA IN 1948

Ethnic Group	Males	Females	Totals
Fulani	717	358	1,075

Adapted from: 'Table 7. Accra 1948. AFRICANS BY TRIBE AND SEX' p.31. In Acquah 1958.

<sup>90</sup> AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION, PER THOUSAND POPULATION OF FULANI MALES AND FEMALES

FULANI	1 YEAR	1-4	5-15	16-44	45+
MALES	7	51	64	395	150
FEMALES	13	49	62	164	45

Adapted from: 'Table 10' Age and Sex Distribution of the Main Tribal Groups, 1948' p.34. In Acquah, 1958.

<sup>91</sup> Pellow (1985: 419-444) discusses the history of settlement of Muslim peoples in Accra, the Fulani among them. However in her 'Proposed Segmentary Model' she implies that the Fulani are all of Nigerian origin.

general terms, the further they had migrated the fewer women among them and conversely, the closer to Accra the higher the proportion of females.

In 1970 Polly Hill published *Studies in Rural Capitalism*, 'a collection of studies of indigenous economies in Ghana and Nigeria'.<sup>92</sup> Two chapters were devoted to the Fulani in Ghana. The first was entitled 'Cattle-ownership on the Accra Plains', and the second 'The Northern Ghanaian cattle trade'. The former highlights the part that Fulani herdsmen play in Ghanaian livestock production and management, the latter, the trade of cattle in Northern Ghana. Despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence of the research upon which these two articles are based, they are nevertheless of vital importance to the present study. 'Cattle ownership on the Accra Plains', represents the only published material (found to date) specifically dealing with the Fulani on the Accra Plains. The geographical area in which the work was undertaken overlaps the fieldwork location of this work.<sup>93</sup> Hill states that, 'Nowhere else in the Accra Plains did I find any evidence of the arrival of Fulani herdsmen before the 1920s' (Hill 1970: 69).

## Some Fulani individuals in Greater Accra today

The following section turns attention to some of the individuals whose detailed life histories were collected in the present study. Of the 204 individuals whose life stories were gathered 99 were female and 105 male. The ages were distributed between age nine and over one hundred.

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<sup>92</sup> By her own admission, both articles are based on sparse data. In the introduction to her Accra study, she writes that the fieldwork was, 'undertaken on thirty mornings only, between December 1963 and June 1964, and on a full count of cattle made during that time by J.E.A Afotey' (Hill 1970: 53). The article on Northern Ghana 'leans wholly upon statistics made available to [her] by the Animal Health Division' (Hill 1970: xiii).

<sup>93</sup> In 1964, Hill wrote a paper (unpublished) for the Institute of African Studies, University of Legon entitled *A Socio-economic report on cattle-ownership and Fulani herdsmen in the Ashaiman/Dodowa district of the Accra Plains*. She interviewed the three men who founded the Fulani community in New Madina.

## Residence

Roughly equal numbers of people were currently residing in urban, peri-urban and rural locations (see table 3.1).

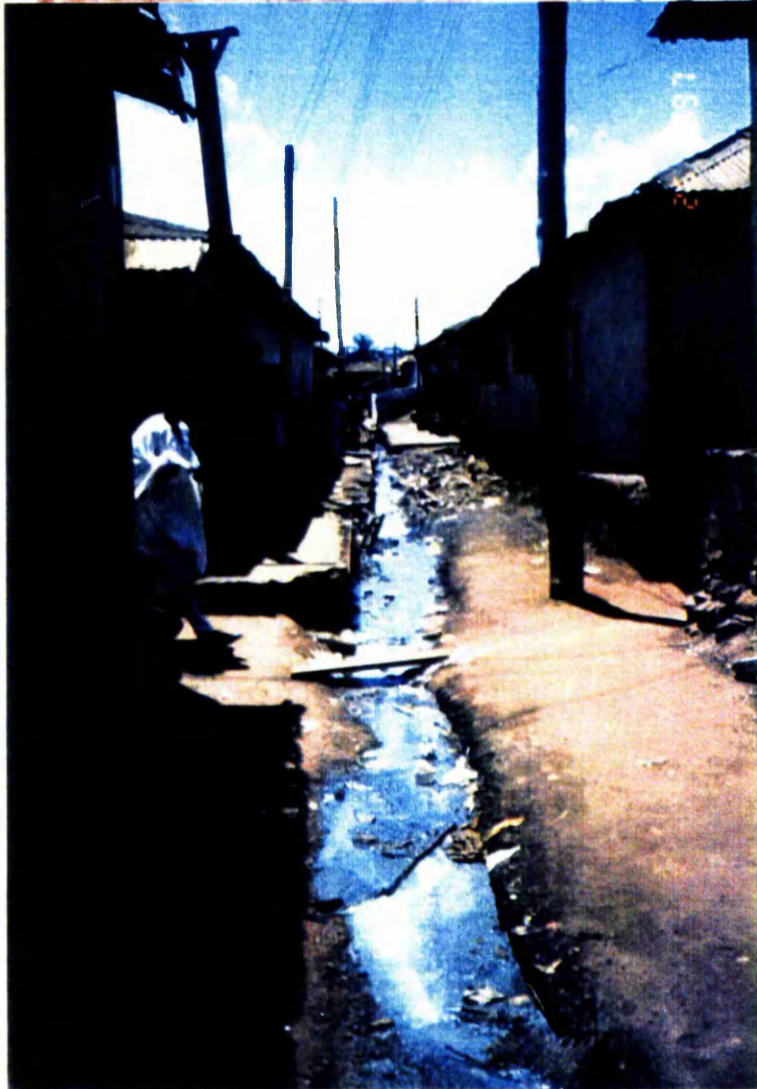
Table 3.1: Sample distribution by sex and location.

TYPE OF LOCATION	MALE	FEMALE
Rural	29.5%	26.3%
Peri-Urban	30.5%	40.4%
Urban	34.3%	31.3%
No fixed Residence	5.7%	2.0%
Total	105	99

Within the region of Greater Accra, the types of residential patterns and settlements found vary enormously, from densely populated urban settlements (such as Nima) to sparsely populated and scattered dwellings in remote rural settings (Odumse). In between these two extreme types of settlement are areas which I will term peri-urban. These peri-urban locations were once rural but are now being encroached upon by large and expanding urban settlements, which are themselves becoming increasingly urbanized. In the urban settlements of Accra, there is no recognizable Fulani area. In the rural area, the Fulani are also relatively scattered. Arguably it is only in New Madina that the Fulani are to be found in a localized settled area. New Madina is considered below.

There are some obvious differences in the lives of the inhabitants of these three broadly defined areas. These differences relate to issues such as occupation, language use and values, all of which are intimately tied into considerations of ethnic, social and individual identities.

*Rural & urban dwellings*





## Livelihood

In broad terms, the occupations that individuals can and do engage in are related to the areas of settlement in which they reside. While domestic work is a constant for most women, the type and duration of such work depends on such factors as their location (rural, peri-urban, urban), as well as other issues including their age, status and class (free-born or slave). In terms of location, for example, a woman living in an exclusively rural area has a different domestic workload and schedule from her counterparts in the peri-urban and urban centres. A rural woman may have to walk for several kilometres a day in order to fetch water (for drinking and bathing and cleaning etc.) as well as to collect firewood for cooking.

Women in the urban centres have more opportunities for trading (in a variety of goods) as well as for engaging in other money making activities, such as selling cooked food. This is not to say that women living in remote, rural compounds do not trade, they do. Some sell little bags of *gari* (processed cassava) or sugar or other staple foodstuffs. Other women sell individual 'sticks' of cigarettes to the local men. They however usually fail to mention these small-scale trading activities as part of their 'work'. The selling of *gari*, or sugar or cigarettes, does not require that the woman be available all day in wait for a potential customer, young children are often on hand to help.

Women living in a variety of different locations process and sell milk and milk products. The quantities of milk available for processing however depend upon a variety of factors, not least the season. In the rainy season, when the vegetation is lush and enough milk is produced by the cows to feed the calves, the excess is used in a variety of different ways, according to personal circumstances and family predicaments. The size of a family, for example, determines whether there is excess milk which can be processed and sold, or whether it is all consumed by the family.

Rural women can and do sell fresh milk, others process it before selling. Women living in urban areas also travel to rural locations in order to purchase fresh milk and either process it on the spot, or take it home to process it. Women also farm. They sometimes have their own fields to grow food for the family. Some also cultivate food for sale. Farming and trading in goods, food and milk products are the main occupations of rural based women. There are a few others who engage in different types of work. Many young girls attend school (see Chapter Five on Education). Most also attend Koranic school. Three of the women interviewed taught the Koran to local children. Other occupations, were seamstress and hairdresser.

The distinction made between urban, peri-urban and rural types of settlement is not meant to imply that their inhabitants remain static. There is a marked fluidity of movement between urban and rural areas. In particular rural dwellers may often get the chance to move to the cities. Those living in peri-urban areas, in particular many of those in New Madina, move between rural and urban locations. The following case study illustrates the potential for movement and interaction between these three interrelated, yet distinct areas,

### *The case of Fatima's fluid day*

Fatima's family lives in a peri-urban setting (around the town of Afeynia, Greater Accra). During the rainy season, when milk is plentiful, Fatima (who is eighteen years old and unmarried) spends her days travelling to and from Accra in order to buy and sell fresh milk. At about one o'clock she arrives in a village called Tachikope, in the bush, where she buys six gallons of milk (supply and season permitting). She pays about 1,500 cedis per gallon. From Tachikope she takes public transport to Ashaiman where she transfers to another bus that takes her straight to Nima in Accra. She arrives in Nima between five and six p.m.

In Nima Fatima sits by the roadside and sells her milk. She simply sits down on the pavement and waits for customers to arrive. She sells the milk by the bottle. She sells each bottle for 700 cedis. She therefore makes around 3,500 cedis per gallon (making 2,000 cedis profit). Fatima waits until all the milk has been bought. At night she stays with a Nigerien Fulani lady who is a family friend.

By 5 a.m. the following morning she has begun her journey back home usually arriving at around 8 a.m. Fatima repeats this daily routine for two consecutive days at a time. For the next two days she simply buys the milk and sells all of it directly to someone who gives her 3,000 cedis per gallon. All the money that she makes from the sale of the milk belongs to her. However, she gives the money to her mother for safe-keeping. This is Fatima's schedule during the rainy season. In the dry seasons when there is no milk, she stays at home and helps her mother.

Table 3.2. Occupation by sex

OCCUPATION	MALE	FEMALE
Domestic work		<b>33</b>
Domestic work/ Trader/ Farmer		<b>16</b>
Domestic work/ Milk selling and processing	<b>2*</b>	<b>24</b>
Religious work	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>
Traditional artisans	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>
Wage workers	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>
Traders	<b>8</b>	
Herders/cattle traders	<b>16</b>	
Farmers	<b>4</b>	
Farmers/herders	<b>31</b>	
Student	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>
Nothing	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
Total Number	<b>105</b>	<b>99</b>

\* Two men sold fresh milk.

Based upon respondents' claims.

The types of work in which men were engaged fall roughly into six main categories: 1) religious workers, 2) traditional entrepreneurs/artisans, 3) wage workers, 4) traders 5) cattle herders and 6) farmers. These categories of work were not mutually exclusive, nor were they immutable. Many of the individuals claimed to be doing several types of work at the same time. During the life course as well as seasonally, individuals can and do change their types of work depending on a variety of different factors (economic, seasonal, domestic, political etc.).

There are different degrees of status attached to the various types of work. For example, very high status is associated with being a mallam. Cattle work is universally considered to be a worthy and indeed the most traditional of occupations. One incident in particular illustrates the importance and standing of certain occupations over others:

#### *Jodoma's jobs*

I knew that Jodoma Tal worked Monday to Saturday as a full-time steward, from early morning to late evening. Sundays was his day off. I knew this information because I knew his employees and had visited his place of work on several occasions and seen him at work. On the day that I formally interviewed him, I did so at his place of work. When I asked him what he did for a living however, he replied that he was a mallam and a cattle herder. I paused and waited for him to mention his present employment. When he omitted to say that he also worked as a steward, I asked him about the work that he was doing at the present time. Oh yes, he replied as an afterthought, I also work as a steward!

Jodoma had omitted to mention his main occupation. Instead he had mentioned two high status occupations, mallam and herder. Being a steward was not regarded as an occupation of high standing and not at first mentioned.

Other occupations were afforded a more ambiguous status. Many 'free-born' Fulani (irrespective of country of origin and/or duration of settlement in Accra) made it clear to me that slaughtering cattle for commercial purposes was the work of 'slaves'. The following case study illustrates not only how a person's

occupation can change over the course of his lifetime but also the significance and status, or lack of, attached to certain occupations.

### ***Butchers and slaves***

There was a Fulani butcher in Madina, his name was Aamadu Hama Diallo. It was generally believed and rumoured that he was a *maccudo* (slave) because of his occupation. When I got the opportunity to talk to him, however he said that he was not of slave origin, but a free-person. He admitted that in his home country of Burkina Faso and also in Niger, it used to be considered *haram* (forbidden) for free-born Fulani to become butchers. He insisted, however, that things had changed and that, in this day and age, it was no longer a shameful and outlawed thing for a free-born Fulani to do.

Aamadu Hama Diallo had spent his youth as a cattle herder and farmer in Burkina Faso. At the age of twenty-five he decided to leave home and to look for work elsewhere. He went to Ibadan in Nigeria where he lived for one year. He worked as a petty trader, selling plastic utensils. He didn't like Ibadan and after one year returned to his hometown in Burkina Faso, where he resumed work farming and herding.

At the age of thirty-three, Aamadu again decided to leave home, this time he went to Côte d'Ivoire. He stayed with his father's brother's son and worked for two years as a contract herder. In 1969 he left Côte d'Ivoire for Ghana. He has lived in Ghana ever since, apart from periodic visits back to Burkina Faso in order to visit his family. In Ghana he started working as a butcher.

He explained that it had not been a tradition in his family to work as a butcher and that anyone who wants to be a butcher can be one. In his own case, when he first came to Ghana, he had gone to stay in Koforidua (Eastern Region) with a Zabarama friend. This friend had persuaded him to learn to be a butcher and had taught him the necessary skills. He said that circumstances meant that he had to learn this profession in order to work and support his family. Aamadu said that in his situation, it was out of necessity and circumstance that he became a butcher.

At the end of the interview, Aamadu added 'Fulani are not Butchers!' An admission, despite all he had previously said, that free-born Fulani never become butchers.

### Religious work

For men, being a mallam is a prestigious and high status occupation. Fourteen of the men in the study, referred to themselves as mallams. Three women taught the Koran. Women invariably teach the Koran at home, and local children and women come to be taught. For the men on the other hand, being a mallam involves being mobile (for a longer discussion on this topic, see Chapter Five).

### Traditional entrepreneurs/artisans

Included in this category are those individuals who work as traditional musicians (performing at Fulani weddings and out-doorings and other Fulani ceremonies), praise-singers, traditional weavers. Seven men and one woman fell into these categories. The men had a variety of other occupations, such as farming. The woman was a praise-singer but also traded in cloth. (See 'Singing *suudu-baabas*: The case of the musical *maccube* from Mali', Chapter Six.) The routes through which individuals came into these jobs were diverse. Some were born into them and were expected to pursue these particular professions. Others learnt of their own free will. The following example is of a man who taught himself how to sing by imitation and has carved out a life for himself as a traditional musician. He is now viewed by many as the standard bearer of Fulani tradition through his ability to recite epic tales and family genealogies stretching across the sub-region.

#### *The case of the mobile musician*

Abdulai is thirty-four years of age. He was born in Fadan Gourma, Burkina Faso. He lived there with his parents until he was seventeen years old. In his youth he herded his family's cattle. He had always enjoyed music as a young boy and when he attended weddings and other ceremonies, he would listen attentively to the music that was being played. When he was alone in the bush with the cows he would repeat what he had heard and practice his singing, whiling away the time.

At the age of seventeen, he left his parental home with a group of young friends. Abdulai recounted to me every single journey that he made, in days, months and years up to his present stay in Ashaiman. He recounted ninety-four separate travels, all in the course of performing his music and earning his living. His singing had taken him across Burkina Faso, to Niger, Togo and Ghana. He visited and performed in many different hamlets and towns and cities. His stays ranged from overnight stops to sojourns of several days to weeks and months. Since leaving home, the longest period of time he has spent in any one place is his present stay in Ashaiman, Ghana. He had lived in Ashaiman since 1989. He currently travels around Ghana, particularly in and around Greater Accra, singing at any ceremony to which he is invited with his fellow Fulani musicians.



*A Praise-singer*

(note the cedi notes tucked into his hat)



## Traders

The term 'trader' encompasses a multitude of different occupations. In some circumstances it was difficult to ascertain what certain individuals, who claimed to be 'traders', were actually doing. This was as much because what a person trades in can change often, as because of the reluctance of some to divulge the truth. One incident gave an insight into why some people were reluctant to divulge the nature of their trade goods.

### *The truth about traders*

Having interviewed Alhaji Aamadu Bah, I turned to his daughter in-law Fatumata (his son's wife as well as his wife's brother's daughter) to discuss her own life history. Alhaji hung around listening to the interview, much to my discomfort and that of Fatumata. Alhaji had told me that all his sons were '*commerçants*', traders, and would not expand to tell me what he meant by this. Fatumata however told me that her husband (Alhaji's son) tested gold for its authenticity and level of purity, an illegal operation. Alhaji was furious with Fatumata's admission and told me to erase what I had just written and simply write down that he was a trader.

## Herder

Fifty-one men were at the time of the study engaged in working with cattle in some capacity. Only ten claimed to be working exclusively as cattle herders. A further thirty men farmed at the same time as raising cattle. The rest worked variously as cattle traders, mallams, night watchmen, stewards, students and drivers, or in various combinations of these occupations. As with the other occupational categories, the fortunes of individuals can and do change, so that a man who herds exclusively today may turn his hand to another occupation, such as cattle trading, in the future. Concomitantly many of the men who worked in a variety of other capacities at the present time had herded in the past. The following case study illustrates how changing fortunes can lead to changes in occupation. The fact that only ten individuals claimed to be working exclusively as herders should not be taken to mean that only ten had ever worked with cattle.

### *Oumar's oscillating occupations*

Abubakar Oumar is a cattle trader. He follows pastoral Fulani around and moves on when they move. He buys and sells their cattle. When I asked him what official documents he used in order to travel he said that he had come through the bush...*'Les Bergers n'ont pas de papiers'*. (Herders/Shepherds don't have papers').

Abubakar Oumar is thirty-eight years old. He was born in a town called Bitin Kori in the Republic of Niger. Two months before Abubakar was born his father died. When he was just six years old his mother also died. His mother's brother raised him in Niger. He attended Koranic school and tended the family's herds. At the age of eight, his mother's brother and family relocated to Benin. In Benin, Abubakar continued to herd, farm and study the Koran. He moved at the age of thirteen from one mother's brother, Ousmana, to another, Ali. Here he stayed for five years up till the age of eighteen.

In 1980 Abubakar bought his first cow from the proceeds he earned from the sale of his millet crop. He had been forced to sell this after he became ill and could no longer farm. From the proceeds of the millet, at the age of eighteen, he started trading in sheep and goats and gradually amassed enough wealth to graduate to trading in cattle in Benin.

By 1986, just six years after the purchase of his first cow, Abubakar had sixty cattle. In 1986, at the age of twenty-seven, Abubakar, by now married, left Benin with his wife for Togo. In Togo his entire herd of cattle fell ill. Abubakar did not know what disease they had. According to him, on the very day that the veterinarians came to inject his herd, they all died. He sold his cows to a butcher in Lome for 1,500 CFA. To this day he has not received his money from the butcher.

He bought three cows in Ho in 1989, they are still there. They multiplied to seven, but he sold two, leaving five. Abubakar's cattle are being looked after by his wife's father. In 1990 he arrived in Ashaiman, Greater Accra, and stayed there for about one year. In 1991 he went back to Togo.

In 1992 he moved to Nigeria where he lived for four years. In 1996 he returned to Nkwanta in the Eastern region of Ghana. In March 1997, he returned to Ashaiman where he was staying at the time of interview. Three months after Abubakar and I first spoke I tried to find him again, I was told that he had moved on...he no longer lived in Ashaiman.

In general cattle herding skills are acquired by males during their childhood and early youth. (See Chapter Five). Many of the men interviewed, who now claimed other professions and livelihoods, may have herded in the past and may herd again in the future. For, as Abubakar Oumar's case illustrates, fortunes and circumstances change and, in order to survive, one has to be flexible and adapt.

Some men herd other people's cattle (contract herders) and own none of their own. Some simultaneously herd for someone else and own cattle. Others do not currently herd but own cattle and employ others to look after them. For some men, these distinctions represent different life stages. As they develop and amass their own wealth they may choose to do different types of work and employ others to undertake the task of tending to the cattle on a daily basis.

In Greater Accra, the types of contracts entered into between Fulani cattle herders and the owners of the livestock differ enormously from case to case. The only feature of contract herding which appeared to be fairly universal was the fact that most Fulani herders were allowed to keep the milk from the cows for themselves. For some herdsmen, the third born calf of each cow was their only payment. Others received periodic 'gifts' from the cattle owners (sacks of corn, *gari* etc.). Alhaji Saadu's case was fairly typical. (Alhaji Diallo is Saadu's father's sister's son.)

### *Alhaji Saadu,*

Alhaji Saadu is in charge of three cattle kraals each belonging to a different owner. All the milk he gets from the cows is his. This is his only payment. Typically, in the rainy season he gets about four gallons of milk, sometimes as much as five and a half. He can earn about 1,500 cedis a gallon. When he has four gallons of milk, he sells two and keeps the remaining two for home consumption. He said that this is the situation in which most of the herders in the country find themselves, they work only for the milk.

Contract herders are rarely paid a regular wage. The only case I found was that of Saalu Sambo,

### *Saalu Sambo*

Sambo is a contract herder and lives in Weija. He was born in Niger. He has lived variously in Niger, Mali, Benin and now lives in Ghana. His occupations have included watchman, sheep herder, apprentice tailor, farmer. Currently Sambo is looking after the cattle of fifteen different individuals. All the cattle are in one kraal. Every month he receives 500 cedis per head of cattle from fourteen of the owners. One of the owners however pays him by giving him the third born calf of each of his six cows. All the milk belongs to Sambo. Currently there are 210 cattle in his charge.

Sambo was very fortunate for he had a steady guaranteed monthly income.

### Wage-workers

This category includes all of the individuals who worked as drivers, watchmen, cooks, tailors, painters, butchers and stewards. Many individual men and women take on different occupations according to their age and status, as well as according to the season and the work opportunities available to them at a particular time and place. As with the other categories of occupation, some of the individuals who were predominantly working in these occupations worked in other capacities also. (See Jodoma's jobs above.)

### Origins

Many individual Fulani in Ghana have migrated here from neighbouring states. I have met individuals who hail from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Senegal and even Mauritania. The majority of people

however, are from the first three of these countries. Two fifths of my sample were 'made-in-Ghana', the rest came Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. There were a few individuals from Chad, Cameroon and elsewhere, but I never met them in Accra.

Although so many Fulani in this study were 'made-in-Ghana', almost all members of the second and third generation however recognized their parental or grand-parental origins to have been outside Ghana. Perhaps the only area of Ghana where Fulani would claim to be indigenous is Bawku in the far northeast of Ghana, on the Burkina border. This was illustrated by a remark made by an elderly Burkina Fulani woman who voted during the Ghanaian presidential and parliamentary elections in December 1997. A polling agent thought that she was not Ghanaian and approached her. When he asked her where she came from, she replied Bawku. The polling agent accepted her answer and she was permitted to vote. She was however a Burkina Be citizen.

Countries closer to Ghana have a larger number of representatives than do those further away. It would appear also that more men than women migrate. Among Fulani populations whose country of origin is distant from Ghana, such as the Senegalese Fulani, there were apparently no first generation females. Senegalese men have married Fulani women from other countries and had children in Accra. The same appears to be true of countries such as Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Guinea. However, in the cases of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, first generation female migrants were well represented.

In terms of nationality, many people claim to be nationals of specific countries. These are mainly the first generation migrants. Others, often second and third generation, who have known nothing but Ghana, see themselves as Ghanaians. Others still are adaptable opportunists, willing to change nationality and allegiance according to circumstance.

# **Centripetal & centrifugal forces in Fulani society:**

## **Solidarity & dispersal**

### **Inter & intra national mobility**

Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in the Society. This question is unavoidable in discussing Fulani society, for it is striking to see how widely dispersed people become in the course of one lifetime. Despite all the travelling and all the 'changes of personnel', however, this society seems to have conserved a remarkable stability of structure over the centuries.

(Riesman 1974: 36)

In Riesman's view (in relation to the Fulani of Djelgobe) the centrifugal forces at play in the lives of people are of two kinds. There are those which arise as a result of ecological considerations and those of a social and psychological nature (Riesman 1974: 37). In terms of ecological factors, Riesman considers what he terms the 'role of the mode of production', namely the Fulani way of cattle-raising. The combined conditions - of individual ownership of cattle; the need to migrate seasonally with cattle in search of water and pasture; the individualistic and scattered nature of their agricultural cultivation and the need to balance human and bovine populations - all serve to separate and disperse peoples. While the factors that Riesman mentions are undoubtedly important (to varying degrees throughout the Fulani diaspora), other centrifugal forces are at work of a more social nature - such as labour migration and divorce - spatially separating and forcing families and individuals apart across the West African sub region.

It could also be argued that spatial separation entails a, '...broadening of the social horizon as people emigrate and settle elsewhere' (Riesman 1974: 37). The parents, siblings, cousins and childhood friends of a mature man or woman could potentially be spread across huge areas of West Africa, while the man himself may be living with his own children and their children's cousins and friends, who are all still living together.

Although this spatial separation is undoubtedly an increasingly common occurrence in West Africa, it is perhaps more marked among the Fulani than any other ethnic group in the sub-region, given their historically mobile and in some cases nomadic existence.

The question, simply put, is whether this tendency towards spatial separation (of spouses and kin) will lead to the breakdown of traditional, kin based support and kin managed resources (land, cattle, human labour etc.) - leading to the potential collapse of traditional kin alliances and solidarity. It would appear from the Fulani evidence in Accra that two factors are in play at the same time. On the one hand, individuals have to rely on non-traditional sources of support in the urban context. *Suudu-baabas* are a case in point (see Chapter Six) as are other migrant networks. On the other hand, geographically widespread kin ties and ethnic solidarity are ensuring that many individuals are cared for and supported in times of need. In contrast to the centrifugal forces there are other factors at work, in direct opposition, binding families and lineages together.

### **Centrifugal tendencies**

#### **Sibling groups: Solidarity and dispersal**

Various circumstances and reasons have pushed people away from their countries of origin and regions of birth and pulled them to Accra where we met. Some have come to 'hustle' for work as herders (as many of the young men put it). Some have come for an arranged marriage (see Chapter Four). Some have been sent to stay with relatives living in Ghana, sent to be reared and trained (see Chapter Five). These 'home' towns and countries of origin continue to play a significant part in the lives of some such migrant peoples to varying degrees. For some people links are maintained and strengthened with 'home' (through, for example,



marriage alliances, child fostering and trips to visit relatives). Other links are lost and new homes are established in Accra.

One way of appreciating the geographical extent of the dispersion of Fulani families, from the perspectives of those in Accra, is to look at the geographical spread of sibling groups. The following table compares place of birth with current residence for the siblings of those interviewed.

**Table 3.3 Spread of siblings:**  
**Number of countries in which siblings were born and currently reside**

No. Of Countries	Born % (N)	Reside % (N)
1	<b>73.0% (149)</b>	<b>15.0% (31)</b>
2	<b>22.5% (46)</b>	<b>48.5% (99)</b>
3	<b>.5% (1)</b>	<b>21.0% (43)</b>
4	<b>-</b>	<b>5.5% (11)</b>
5	<b>-</b>	<b>1.5% (3)</b>
6	<b>-</b>	<b>.5% (1)</b>
7	<b>-</b>	<b>3.0% (6)</b>
Don't Know	<b>4.0% (8)</b>	<b>5.0% (10)</b>
Total No.	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>

N = 105 men and 99 women

Note: The average size of the sibling groups was eight, ranging from one individual (ego only) to forty-three.

Although almost three quarters of the sibling groups were born in the same country, only a fifth of this number resided in a single country at the time of my questionnaire. This evidence points to the quite dramatic dispersion of individuals across space and through time. One particular sibling group provides an example of the kinds of dispersal that can and does take place:-

### *A dispersed sibling group*

This sibling group represents the sons and daughters of the late Alhaji Barry (Barry himself appears later on in the Chapter and again in Chapter Four). This example is rather an extreme case in that Alhaji Barry had six wives and forty-two children. Three of his children died when they were infants and another one died as an adult. Currently thirty-eight of Barry's children are alive, all were born in Greater Accra. The oldest two of Barry's children were born in Rouga, in present day Maamobi (Central Accra) the rest were born in New Madina.

Today, however, they are spread out across West Africa and indeed across the globe. The core residential area for Alhaji Barry's remaining wives and children is his compound in Greater Accra, where most of them were born. Eighteen of his children remain in this compound. Seven more reside in various other locations within Greater Accra. Six of his children reside in the Volta region. The remaining eight children live outside Ghana in seven other countries.

One son is working as a herdsman in Benin. One daughter is working as a maid in Saudi Arabia. Another son is living in Germany (no-one knew what work he was doing there). Two more of his sons are living and working in Libya. One of them is a driver, the occupation of the other is unknown. A son, Jaafaru, lives in Holland, again his occupation is unknown. A daughter, Sawde, lives in Nigeria where she is married and works as a trader. Another of his daughters, Mariam, is living in Burkina Faso and works as a seamstress.

Knowing where a person currently resides provides only a snapshot perspective of their residence. Those living in New Madina at present may have previously lived elsewhere. For example some of Barry's offspring have attempted to travel and reside abroad, in the past, but have been hindered by international laws and regulations regarding migration. Sidiq is a case in point:

### *Hustle and see*

Sidiq lived with both of his parents in New Madina until he was fourteen years old, when he went off to look after his family's cattle in the dry season with his paternal half brother, Illiasu. They would move around with their father's herds looking for good pasture. Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two, Sidiq lived variously in the Volta Region, Asutsuare Junction, Santeo, Odumse, Ochibleku and Apollonia.

At the age of twenty-two, he left home. He went off alone 'to hustle and get money'. He went to Saudi Arabia alone. He travelled on a Ghanaian Passport. He did odd jobs to survive, washing cars, cleaning houses, washing clothes. He stayed there for two years. Soon after his return to Ghana, he set off again. This time, he went to Germany. At that time Beninois citizens had no need of a visa when going to Germany. Sidiq went to Benin and got himself a Benin passport in order to travel. He went to Berlin in Germany. He said, 'I didn't get work, they wouldn't allow me to enter'. He ended up staying at the airport for two weeks. He was then deported back to Benin. From Benin, he returned home to Ghana where he still resides.

Sidiq told me his story in his father's compound, in New Madina, where he now lives. This story raises another issue central to discussions of migration in West Africa, namely the possession, or lack, of official documents and the possession of multiple documents from various countries. This was a difficult question to ask, as some individuals were suspicious of the motives behind the question and worried about revealing information potentially detrimental to their presence in Ghana. The types of documents that these individuals possessed however are shown below:

Table 3.4. Types of international travel documents possessed

Type of Document	Men (N)	Women (N)
None	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>
ID	<b>36</b>	<b>23</b>
Passport	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>
Missing data	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>
Total number	<b>105</b>	<b>99</b>

Based upon respondents' claims.

This is the basic breakdown of the type of documents that individual men and women had in their possession. In general the women were less willing to discuss their papers. One can surmise that in general they were less likely to have any. The term ID includes many different sorts of documents, all of which the owners felt were sufficient proof of their provenance and identity. For example a member of one of the singing groups had a membership card for his particular group. Another old man, who had been a soldier in his youth, had in his possession an out-of-date soldier's identity card. Three of the men had both a Ghanaian passport and a passport from a francophone West African country (see Sidiq Barry's story, entitled 'Hustle and see'). A further three men had both a Ghanaian passport and francophone ID. None of the women professed to having more than one passport.

### Gendered mobility

Mobility, in particular the opportunities for and constraints upon transnational mobility, vary between the sexes. As an indication of the differences, Table 3.5 presents the numbers of countries visited by the men and women in the sample.

Table 3.5. Number of countries visited by women and men

Number of Countries	Women N	Men N
None (Ghana only)	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>
1 other than Ghana	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>
2	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>
3	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>
4	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
5	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>
6	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>
7	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>
8	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
10	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
14	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
30	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
Total Number	<b>99</b>	<b>105</b>

Based upon respondents' claims.

Twenty-seven women, as compared with ten men, had never been outside of Ghana. The numbers of countries visited by the men ranged from none to thirty different countries, with the largest concentration being between one and four other countries. The most visited countries were those bordering Ghana as well as Mali and Niger. The majority of the women had been in up to two other countries.

Salamatu Haruna's story is perhaps an extreme example of the sorts of misfortunes, events, circumstances, and decisions that can affect the lives of people and cause them to move. Salamatu finds herself moving backwards and forwards between Ghana and Niger and Benin, between her natal home and her conjugal home depending on circumstance:

*Mobility and survival: Salamatu's story*

Until her marriage at eleven in 1969, Salamatu grew up with her parents and her full and paternal half-siblings in Desa, Niger. Her husband, Abubakar Hamidu, a Fulani also from Niger, is a mallam and a cattle herder. It was a family marriage, although she could not specify how her husband is related to her. Three months after her marriage, Salamatu was brought to Ghana by her husband. They lived in Labadi, Accra.

Salamatu had been in Ghana for just one month when the government of Ghana passed their 'Aliens Compliance Order' expelling all 'Aliens' who had not regularized their stay in the country. Salamatu and her husband had no official permits to reside in Ghana and therefore had to leave. They went back to Niger for two years and then returned to Accra.

During the first ten or so years of their married life Salamatu's husband, Abubakar, was a trader. He had a small table from which he sold handkerchiefs and other small items. In the late 1970s, the sea flooded their home, causing them to move house and relocate for a fourth time. After six years of marriage, Salamatu returned home to give birth to her first child.

Upon her return from Niger in 1979 Salamatu went to join her husband in Frafraha (on the Accra Plains) where he had been looking after the cattle of the then President of Ghana, Acheampong, for several years. However on 4 June 1979 J.J. Rawlings staged a military coup, overthrowing Acheampong. Salamatu and her family had to relocate yet again. Her husband found work again as a herder, however because of their link with the previous Acheampong



regime they ran into trouble. There were rumours that Salamatu's husband had stolen the cattle of Acheampong. They had to leave the country.

At the age of twenty, Salamatu found herself back in Niger yet again because of political reasons. After staying in Niger for two weeks, Abubakar left for Benin in order to try to find work as a herder. He left his wife and children in Niger. Salamatu returned to live with her parents, by now she had two small children (her first born had died at the age of four). After living with her parents for six years, Salamatu's husband sent money for her to come with their children to join him in Benin. They were all in Benin together for one year.

Salamatu's husband left her in Benin while he went back to Ghana to try to re-establish himself and get a job. He was offered a job by Alhaji Tal who then gave him money to bring his wife and children back to Ghana. Thus, in 1985, Salamatu found herself back in Ghana, in Odumse, in the bush, where she is still today with her husband and her five surviving children. Salamatu is now 38 years old. She has a small pepper farm and sells *wagashi* (a cheese-like preparation made from fresh cow's milk) as well as raising her children.



Salamatu's life has been characterized by mobility, mainly thrust upon her by forces beyond her control, such as political unrest, natural disasters as well as her personal and family circumstances. She now sees Ghana as home. However, she possesses no legal documents to reside there. Salamatu's story illustrates how the factors forcing people to relocate are played out, not only between different states, but often also within them. Her story also shows how links with 'home' are often kept and sometimes drawn upon in times of need.

The languages that individuals speak and/or understand give an insight into the variety of environments they have visited or lived in. Ninety six percent of the people interviewed spoke Fulfulde. Individuals and families living predominantly in the bush speak almost exclusively in Fulfulde among themselves and are considered by some to be 'more Fulani'. Those on the peri-urban fringe are gradually being enveloped by urban settlements (see discussion of New Madina below). Their children are in closer contact with other local groups and are, therefore, conversant in other languages, sometimes to the detriment of their Fulfulde. Although Fulfulde is often still the main language spoken in the home environment, there is more scope to switch between Fulfulde and other languages, depending on circumstance. An example of this 'code switching' is provided by Safiatu, (see case study below). One lady, Oumou (who was brought up in New Madina) put it to me that she and her siblings were Fulani 'fifty-fifty', in other words they were only 50% Fulani. In the city, Fulfulde is, as one commentator put it, 'getting lost'.<sup>94</sup>

### *Safiatu's repertoire*

Safiatu came to New Madina from Niger in 1994 (her early story told in 'How a Visit became a Stay' in Chapter Four). Upon arrival she spoke Fulfulde, Hausa, Djerma and French. Over a period of time, since her arrival in Ghana, she has gradually picked up phrases in Twi, Ga, Ewe and English. She uses all of these 'new' languages when interacting with her neighbours, as and

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<sup>94</sup> See the Chapter on *suudu-baaba* and specifically on how the associations of the 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani are struggling and anguishing over the fact that their meetings take place in Hausa and not in Fulfulde.

when required. Safiatu speaks Twi to the local miller, where she grinds her corn, and Twi with the woman at the well, where she buys buckets of water every day. She greets local traders, who come to sell bread and *kenke* (fermented maize dough, a staple food of southern Ghana) in the compound, in Ga. She also negotiates any purchases she makes in the same language. She greets her neighbour, the owner of the local 'Chemical Shop' (pharmacy) in Ewe and knows how to buy medicine for her daughter there when she is sick. Safiatu has also picked up some words of English from listening to the radio and hearing people around her speak in English. Safiatu switches between her large, and rapidly expanding, repertoire of phrases in all these languages on a frequent basis, according to circumstance.

The numbers of languages that people spoke have been tabulated as follows:

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**Table 3.6. Number of languages spoken by some Fulani men and women in Accra**

Number of languages	Female N	Male N
1	-	-
2	6	3
3	9	15
4	29	21
5	27	20
6	14	21
7	8	9
8	3	5
9	-	3
10	-	3
11	-	-
12	-	1
13	-	1
Missing data	3	3
Total	99	105

Based upon respondents' claims.

Bilingualism is universal. In general the men speak more languages than do the women. The obvious difference between the sexes is in the ability to speak six or more languages. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the men travel more and therefore interact with other ethnic groups to a greater extent than do the women.

In terms of the types of languages spoken by men and women, again there is a difference. The men spoke more languages from all over West Africa, while the women in general spoke more local Ghanaian languages than did the men. This is not only an indication of mobility but also of the fact that a larger proportion of women than men were born locally. The total number of different languages encountered was forty-six. The most widely spoken languages included Fulfulde, Hausa, Ga, Akan, English, Djerma, Ewe, French and Mossi. The total numbers of men and women who could speak these languages (to varying degrees of fluency) have been tabulated below:

Table 3.7. Most widely spoken languages

Language	Men (N=105)	Women (N=99)
Fulfulde	<b>102</b>	<b>95</b>
Hausa	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>
Ga	<b>47</b>	<b>78</b>
Akan	<b>41</b>	<b>70</b>
English	<b>59</b>	<b>31</b>
Djerma	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>
Ewe	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>
French	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>
Mossi	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>

Based upon respondents' claims.

The major languages spoken by most men and women are Fulfulde and Hausa. Then the experiences of the men and women diverge. Fulani women in Accra, whether rural or urban dwellers, have more cause for interaction and code switching with local people, in the markets, at clinics etc. than do their men (see the case of 'Safiatsu's Repertoire'). There were more men, on the other hand, who had a better grasp of English and French than women. Very often, men travel to and visit large commercial centres and have to deal with bureaucracies as well as cattle owners in the official languages of the states in which they live. These differences in language use indicate the different migration patterns (local as well as distant) as well as social interactions of the two sexes.

#### Cattle ownership & dispersion

Having examined the spread of siblings and the number of languages that individual men and women speak, as indicators of mobility and the spread of Fulani families and individuals over time, attention now turns to cattle and their geographical spread. Each individual was asked the number of countries in which their cattle are presently located. The results are presented below:



Table 3.8 . Number of countries in which ego's cattle are located

Number of countries	Female (N)	Male (N)
Ego doesn't have cattle N/A	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>
All cattle in one country	<b>54</b>	<b>73</b>
All cattle in two countries	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Missing data	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>
Total number	<b>99</b>	<b>105</b>

Based upon respondents' claims.

Eighty percent of the men owned cattle and seventy percent of the women. Most had cattle in one country only. However within the various countries, Ghana included, individuals can have animals or herds in different locations. The table below shows that, of those men and women who own cattle, forty-nine women had cattle in Ghana and thirty-nine men.

Table 3.9. Cattle ownership in Ghana

Does ego have cattle in Ghana?	Female (N)	Male (N)
Ego doesn't have cattle N/A	31	21
Yes	49	39
No	14	45
Ego doesn't know	5	-
Total number	99	105

Based upon respondents' claims.

### Centripetal forces

Having considered centrifugal forces, centripetal ones, aimed at forging alliances are now examined. In Chapter Four, marriage and family alliances are looked at in greater detail, and in particular, the ways in which family marriages are arranged by the older generation, to forge alliances and unions between particular kin groups or non-kin Fulani generally. We now return to Sidiq's story ('Hustle and See'). Despite his repeated attempts at travelling and working abroad, which necessarily involved leaving his family behind, the marriage that was arranged for Sidiq was aimed to forge an alliance between himself and a close family member.

#### *Fission and fusion: Mobility and family ties*

Sidiq was married at the age of twenty-six. His wife, Hawawu, was only fourteen years old at the time. Their marriage was arranged and is a family marriage. Sidiq's father, Alhaji Barry, is Hawawu's grandfather; Sidiq and Hawawu's mother are therefore half-paternal siblings.

Hawawu has also travelled to seek a life and employment elsewhere. She is in Saudi Arabia where she is working as housemaid. She has left her husband and three children behind. Their youngest child, Abdul-Rashid is only one and a half years old.

#### Sibling solidarity

Reverting to our discussion of the geographical spread of siblings, attention will now focus on the extent to which these separated siblings keep in touch with each other. That some individuals interviewed did not know how many countries their siblings were born (4%) or resided in (5%) reflects the possibility that siblings may lose touch with each other. To gain a sense of the extent to which sibling

groups keep in touch and communicate with each other, questions were posed as to the manner and frequency of contacts.

Table 3.10. Communication between siblings

Frequency and nature of contact between ego and his/ her siblings.	Total (N) % Men and Women	Men	Women
I have neither seen any of them nor been in touch since I left home.	<b>(28) 14%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
I have not seen any of them but we keep in touch.	<b>(6) 3%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
I see one or two of them occasionally.	<b>(49) 24%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>
I see one or two of them regularly.	<b>(23) 11%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>
I see most of them occasionally.	<b>(6) 3%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
I see most of them regularly.	<b>(44) 21.5%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>35</b>
I still live with some of them.	<b>(40) 19.5%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>
N/A (Only child)	<b>(2) 1%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Total	<b>(204) 100%</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>99</b>

Based upon respondents' claims.

All full and half (paternal and maternal) siblings are included.

Despite becoming dispersed, only fourteen percent had failed to keep in touch with their siblings since leaving the natal home. The rest, eighty-six percent were in touch with their siblings to a greater or lesser extent. Some of the young people were still living at home with their parents and siblings.

The following case illustrates one of the many ways in which siblings may potentially keep in touch. It is the story of a young man, Idrissu Mohammadu who was sent on an errand by his father, to deliver a letter to his brother in Ghana.

***The case of the mobile Mauritanian Mallam: Idrissu Mohammadu***

Idrissu is a twenty-seven year old mallam from Mauritania. He had arrived in Ghana four months prior to our meeting in June 1997. In February 1997, he left his home town of Dar-es-Salaam in Mauritania, alone for Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. He stayed in Burkina for about sixteen days before entering Ghana. Idrissu had been sent to Ghana by his father to deliver a letter to his brother, Ibrahim, who had come to Ghana the previous year. When he reached Techiman, where he knew his brother to be, he found out from local Fulani sources that his brother had in fact travelled to Togo but was expected to return in a month's time.

In Techiman, Idrissu unexpectedly met up with a friend of his, a young Burkina Be Fulani by the name of Saedu Ibrahim, with whom he had studied the Koran in Mali. Saedu and Idrissu decided to travel together. Idrissu decided to bide his time until his brother's return from Togo by travelling to see Accra. When he reached Accra he asked where he could find other Fulani. He was immediately directed to New Madina, where this interview took place. Idrissu and Saedu stayed in the compound of Alhaji Diallo in New Madina for three days and then set off to Ashaiman, where they had been told they would also find other Fulani who would offer them warm hospitality.

This is where Idrissu's story (as I know it) ends. However this is obviously not the end of Idrissu's story. I do not know if he ever met up with his brother and safely delivered the letter to him or if indeed he ever left Ghana. Wherever he looked for them in Ghana, he found and met other Fulani. He was fed and provided with shelter and council. He was adamant, however, that his visit was just that, a visit. Even before he set out from Mauritania he knew that he would

find Fulani in Ghana. He said, 'In Mauritania we know that there are Fulani in Ghana.'

Just how far Idrissu travelled to deliver a letter to his brother and spend some time with him may seem surprising. This case highlights the importance of migrant networks: specifically the food, shelter, guidance and financial and moral support provided by local Fulani in Ghana to visitors who are sometimes, but not always, complete strangers to them.

The social networks that are established and developed by migrants often aid them in coping with the stresses and strains of relocation and settlement (permanent or temporary). By passing through New Madina, more specifically the compound of Alhaji Diallo, there was a sense in which common 'cultural' and ethnic links were being acknowledged and reaffirmed. Idrissu's 'cultural capital' endowed him with a knowledge of Ghana even before he arrived (Bourdieu in Castles and Miller 1988: 25). This knowledge had been gained from various sources: other travellers who had returned with tales of Ghana; his own ability to organize his travels which, as a mallam, he has constantly to do; his ability to adapt to new environments etc. The informal networks that he employed included his family back home in Mauritania, friendships in Ghana and the relationships that he established, mainly with his co-ethnics in Ghana. As Castles and Miller (1988: 25) have noted,

Such networks are dynamic cultural responses, which encourage ethnic community formation and are conducive to the maintenance of transnational family and group ties.

(Castles and Miller 1988: 25)

The settlement of New Madina, where Idrissu sought food and shelter, and where our encounter took place, is significant in the lives of many newly arrived Fulani travellers to Ghana, as well as among many Ghanaian-born Fulani in Accra as will be seen.



## **New Madina:**

### **Following cows & founding a new home**

New Madina is probably the only exclusively Fulani settlement in Greater Accra. During its sixty year existence it has become well known beyond Ghana, and it has affected the lives of many Ghanaian Fulani. Here is the story of the founding of this community, as viewed from Alhaji Diallo's perspective.

#### ***Alhaji Diallo...following cows***

In 1929 a young man by the name of Diallo left his parental home of Mardarga in Burkina Faso. Diallo was then aged about seventeen. He travelled with two of his relatives, Yika (his father's brother) and Barry (his sister's son). The three men had been given a contract to herd cattle from Mardarga to a village in the northern Volta region of Ghana, then the Gold Coast. The entire journey was made on foot and took one month to complete. At the end of their journey, the cattle owner paid them.

Diallo stayed in the northern Volta Region, with his two relatives, for two months. He got a job as a hired herdsman for a local cattle owner. After two years he relocated to another village in the same area where he lived working as a contract herder. In roughly 1933 Diallo and Barry left Ghana for Lome, in present day Togo. They left the Volta region because the cocoa crops had been burnt, leaving many people in the area too poor to buy meat - thus making it difficult for him to find work. In Togo he once again found employment as a hired herdsman.

After two years in Togo Diallo set out to return home to Mardarga, Burkina Faso. However, when he got to Benin, he changed his mind and decided to stay there. In Benin he discovered that he could make a good living as a cattle trader.

At about the age of twenty-five, Diallo relocated again. This time he decided to return to Ghana and settled in a place near Accra called *Rouga*. *Rouga* is a Fulfulde word meaning *wuro na'i*, cattle camp. Once again, he worked there as a hired herdsman for a Kwahwu man. Barry and

Diallo were now living together again with two other Fulani cattle herders (unrelated men). One of the herders was from Burkina and the other from Niger. (See Map in Appendix III of 'Ruga'.)

At the age of roughly twenty-eight Diallo settled in New Madina. He was forced to leave *Rouga*. A soldiers training camp had been established at *Rouga*. According to Alhaji Diallo, the 'whites' complained about the flies that the cattle attracted and the general smell and unpleasantness so close to their training ground. The cattle camp was forced to relocate.

Diallo and Barry found themselves a piece of land in a Ga area called Nmai Dzorn, near the settlement of New Madina, some twenty kilometres or so from the then centre of Accra. The area at that time was devoid of any major settlements, other than a few scattered Ga villages. When the two men had earmarked the land that they wanted to settle on, they contacted the guardian of the land, one Atta Adjei Aboro. Legend had it that Atta's father's father had been the first person to settle in the area.

In order to secure grazing and settlement rights to the land, the cattle owners, who had employed Diallo and Barry, had to provide Atta with a cow and a bottle of *akpeteshie* (local liquor made from maize). The cattle owners also paid for earthen structures to be put up for Diallo and Barry to live in. Barry and Diallo lived in this manner for several years.

After a few years in Nmai Dzorn the cattle owners decided to sell their cattle. They therefore no longer required the services of Diallo and Barry. By now, Diallo had already acquired a herd of cattle of his own. He had bought the cattle with the money he had made during his stay in Benin when he was trading in cattle. Diallo and Barry went on to spend another eight years in Nmai Dzorn developing their own herds. They then thought it best that they acquire land in their own names in order to settle down and make legal claim to the land.

Atta did not own the land, he was simply the custodian. He therefore introduced the two men to the traditional Ga chief of the area, Nii Kortey. Nii demanded two bottles of *akpeteshie* each from Diallo and Barry. Upon making these customary payments, Diallo now became the 'legal' owner of the land. No legally binding documents were signed, nor was the land registered with the municipal authorities

On his newly acquired site, some several hundred meters away from the site on which he had originally settled, Diallo constructed a permanent shelter. Soon after Diallo and Barry settled, another Fulani man, a Nigerien, by the name of Tal, joined them. Tal had been brought to New Madina by his employer, a local Ga man whose herds he was looking after.

These three men, Diallo, Barry and Tal were pioneers, they are renowned throughout the Fulani community.<sup>95</sup> Not only did their herds of cattle expand, so too did their respective families. The ties that bound them, of kinship, (in the case of Diallo and Barry), common ethnic origin, language and livelihood were further cemented by a series of marriage alliances (see Chapter Four). New Madina today plays a pivotal role in the welcoming of newly-arrived Fulani migrants and other visitors.

### **Cattle, concrete & intra-national mobility**

The expansion of the city of Accra was the main factor that forced Alhajis Diallo and Barry to leave *Rouga* (now a densely populated area of Accra) in search of new pastures. The spread and urbanization of Accra continues.<sup>96</sup> The New Madina of today is not the area of bush that the three men first encountered, but is now a rapidly expanding town on the peri-urban fringe of Accra.

When Alhaji Diallo first settled in New Madina it was remote. Initially the growth and urbanization of New Madina was slow because of its isolated nature. There were no major roads leading to the area. There was no electricity. The water supply was erratic and had to be supplemented by a man-made dam

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<sup>95</sup> Despite the fact that each migration event has its own specific and unique qualities, it is possible to generalize these, as Bohnning(1984) has done in his four-stage model (From Castles and Miller 1998:28). This particular four stage model would appear to loosely follow Diallo's own experience in Ghana:

Temporary labour migration of young workers, remittance of earnings and continued orientation to the homeland.

Prolonging of stay and the development of social networks based on kinship or common area of origin and the need for mutual help in the new environment.

Family reunion, growing consciousness of long-term settlement, increasing orientation towards the receiving country, and emergence of ethnic communities with their own institutions (associations, shops, cafes, agencies, professions).

Permanent settlement which, depending on the actions of the government and population of the receiving country, leads either to secure legal status and eventual citizenship, or to political exclusion, socioeconomic marginalization and the formation of permanent ethnic minorities.

<sup>96</sup> On the historical expansion of Accra see Acolatse (1974) and Agbemanu (1967).

(constructed by Diallo, Barry and Tal). In 1994, the road linking New Madina with Madina, an equally rapidly expanding urban settlement, was completed. This has facilitated transport and has effectively opened up New Madina to property developers. It is prime site land and the recent spurt in the growth of private houses and housing estates in the area attests to this. Speaking of the urbanization of New Madina, Issa Diallo, one of Alhaji Diallo's sons said:

Initially it [urbanization] was gradual because people felt that it [New Madina] was remote. There weren't many facilities. The road was bad. There was water but no electricity. The urbanization and encroachment has been gradual, but because of the improvement of the road people have started rushing in. Others had already built [their homes] but didn't move in, but people began moving into their own buildings, others began building as fast as possible and moving in.

Now, the problem is that water is not flowing. When the water starts flowing everywhere here will be inhabited. The water problem is slowing down the rate of building. There are physical factors, the masons have to buy tankers of water. This increases the cost of building.

(Issa Diallo)

As a result of the development of New Madina, mainly in the form of privately constructed residential homes, the expanding herds of the Diallo, Barry and Tal families have been relocated over time to different areas. According to Issa, the carrying capacity of the land has been reduced. In the past, the land available to graze the animals was extensive and each family could take between two and three hundred head of cattle out to graze in one day. The three families have moved their herds to varying degrees. All the Barry family's cattle are elsewhere. Alhaji Diallo has the largest number of cattle left in the area. However the movement of these cattle away from New Madina continues. This is the story of the movements of Diallo's cattle to date:

*Viability: The relocation of the Diallo family's herds*

Diallo's herds of cattle expanded at such a fast rate that at one time, he had over 700 head of cattle in three large kraals in New Madina. It became increasingly difficult to maintain so many cattle in the area. Thirty years ago Diallo first decided to move some of his cattle to Apollonia. Five years later they were further sub-divided and some were taken to Ochibleku from New Madina. Twenty years ago a further division of herds took place and some were sent to Asutsuare Junction and Katamanso. Seventeen years ago a further kraal of cattle was sent to Juapong in the Volta Region. This has been the most recent of the major movements of Diallo's cattle and the furthest. At present, Diallo has one cattle kraal in New Madina with over 150 head of cattle. (See Map 2.2 for location of places mentioned.)

The three families have had to move their cattle and relocate some of their members in order to cope with the rapid development of their area. As Issa pointed out, 'People are moving in. In years to come, the people of New Madina will be just like the people of Nima'.<sup>97</sup> In other words, he envisaged a future in which, the once rural area of, New Madina will become a large, heavily populated, urban centre.

Issa also pointed to other potential impacts upon the lives of the Fulani in New Madina as a result of the relocation of their cattle. As the cattle are moved away, the Fulani children tend to go outside their compound to play with the other local children. In so doing they learn the local languages and end up speaking these better than Fulfulde. When there are cattle in the compound the children take great pleasure in staying at home and playing with the animals and helping to look after them. In playing with the animals at home, the children naturally speak in Fulfulde. Moving cattle away also affects the diet, for there is less fresh milk available to drink and for the preparation of favourite traditional dishes for home consumption. The loss of cattle also means that the opportunity to gain extra cash from the sale of milk is lost.

Another result of the rapid development of the area is the increasing conflict between the cattle herders and the local agriculturalists. In the past

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<sup>97</sup> Nima is a densely populated area of Accra. There is a large Muslim population

farmers have had their crops trampled. Building-block makers, who have left their bricks to dry out in the sun, have had them crushed by the cattle. Issa Diallo said of the situation,

With farmers it is more or less normal, whenever you have animals and a farm, your animals will walk over [the fields]. You have to discuss [with the farmers] and compensate them. This [the incidence of trampling] has even reduced for there is not enough space for farming. It [trampling] is seasonal. When the crops are harvested the cattle can move freely, but now because of the rains, when people are planting [it is a difficult time] ...they [farmers] do their nurseries in the bush and before you realize you [your cattle] have destroyed it! All those things are normal [i.e. cattle destroying farms] like cars and accidents. Once there are cars then accidents will never die down.

The following incident occurred two years ago in the Barry compound, the story was narrated to me by Sidiq.

### *A case of cattle & conflict*

In 1995, the Barry family were involved in a local dispute. Their grazing cattle trampled upon, and destroyed, the red pepper and tomato nursery of a local Ga man. The owner of the nursery reported the case to the local politician (Assembly man) as well as to the police. The police came to the Barry household and detained one of the Barry sons who happened to be in the compound at the time. He was imprisoned at Tema police station.

Sidiq, on hearing that his brother had been taken away by the police, went to the police station where his brother was behind bars. From the station he went to Michel camp (military barracks) to find a soldier friend of the family.

The aggrieved farmer, the local politician, the police and the soldier all congregated in the Barry compound to discuss the situation. According to Sidiq the farmer initially demanded compensation of one million cedis to cover, not only the cost of his lost crops but also, the transport costs and general inconvenience he had experienced as a result. The Barry family refused to pay this sum. After further negotiation it was agreed that they should pay the farmer

50,000 cedis which they duly did. Later that same day Barry's son was released by the Chief of police.

### **Concluding remarks**

In examining New Madina in detail, we have seen how stories of 'following cows' to Ghana, which are common in the narratives of many Fulani men and women, have led in this particular instance to the establishment and development of a localized Fulani settlement. The establishment of this one area of settlement has led to the development of a self-sustaining system of migratory movements. Urban dwellers in Greater Accra, as well as those living in rural areas, all know of New Madina. It has become a pivotal point in the chain of migration to Greater Accra and an important hub of communication among those already resident in Accra, straddling, as it does, the rural/urban interface.

At the beginning of this Chapter Sidiq's account told of how he acquired his first cow. Upon the death of his father, Alhaji Barry, one of the founding fathers of the Fulani settlement in New Madina, Sidiq inherited forty-five cows. He therefore has his own substantial herd of cattle. These cows are located in the Volta Region (moved out because of the rapid and ongoing urbanization of New Madina) and represent another phase in the ongoing movement and relocation of Fulani individuals and their cattle over space and through time. The extent to which people are investing time and effort into building up their herds within Ghana and spreading them out to various regions shows, in some ways, the extent to which Ghana has become a home for many Fulani today. Some urban as well as rural dwellers have cattle back home in their countries of origin, many more have cattle in Ghana.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **Globalizing kinship: Marriage & mobility among far flung Fulani families**

Marriage is perhaps the single most important site for the construction, development and maintenance of ethnic identity. Three decades ago, Jack Goody (1969: 167) wrote of the 'non-incorporation' of the Fulani (and other ethnic groups) in Northern Ghana. He noted that while Gonja peoples were marrying Isala and Mossi, they expressed aversion to the idea of marrying Fulani and Lobi. Indeed, of the peoples he was writing about, the Fulani were among the two most 'rejected' groups, as far as marriage was concerned. Hagberg made a similar point in relation to the Fulani and farmers in Comoé Province, Burkina Faso, noting, 'Marriage between Fulbe and autochthonous farmers is, at least ideologically, unthinkable' (Hagberg 1998: 50). Elsewhere he also noted, '...ideally it is impossible for Kaboro and Fulbe to marry each other. All informants strongly resisted even thinking about it. Men of one group may nevertheless admire women from another, and vice versa'.<sup>98</sup>

Although Fulani represent a small minority of the Ghanaian and Greater Accra population, and their settlement is scattered, to a great extent they are managing to maintain and reproduce themselves as a 'we' group that is recognized by Fulani and non-Fulani alike. This chapter presents a profile of the evidence on the types of marriages that Fulani enter into in Accra today (and in the past), detailing stories and perspectives of individual men and women. Ultimately this chapter is concerned with the maintenance, or potential loss, of Fulani identity (at the levels of the ethnic

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<sup>98</sup> One wonders how women from one group perceive the men of the other!



group, society and individual), through the choice of marriage partners, as well as the issues of separation and solidarity entailed in discussions of mobile marriage strategies.

The chapter takes as its point of departure the ideal types of marriages that Stenning and Dupire documented. Both Stenning (1959) and Dupire (1970) made the point that marriage patterns and practices as well as divorce rates correlated, functionally, with the cattle-keeping way of life. As we shall see these same types of marriages are still occurring in Greater Accra today, however, not for the tightly deterministic reasons that these two authors encountered. In Greater Accra there is no mode of livelihood completely dependent upon cattle. Here in Accra the fit between marriage and livelihood is far more complex.

We shall consider the types and frequencies of marriages encountered among the individuals in the sample in order to understand the types of family and non-family marriages entered into. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of first generation migrants as well as subsequent generations, made-in-Ghana, we can begin to understand the emergence of a distinctively Ghanaian pattern of marriage alliance in which local (Ghanaian) family alliances are occurring between families with (often) differing national origins.

### *Fulani marriage in Accra*

One can state that there is no single type of marriage in Fulani societies nowadays.

(Dupire 1970: 83, my translation)<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The Wodaabe of Northern Nigeria in the 1950s, studied by Stenning, and the various Fulani groups that Dupire and Riesman worked among in the 1960s and 1970s must be compared cautiously with the transnational Fulani peoples of Greater Accra in the late 1990s.

The variations in the types of marriages into which different Fulani groups enter, throughout the Fulani Diaspora, are extensive. Dupire (1970: 25) noted that even in one Fulani group, variations in types of marriage are great, and that to a large extent differences between groups are determined primarily by the extent to which a group is nomadic or sedentary, as well as the degree to which they are 'Islamized'. Her hypothesis is that the nomadic, non-Islamic groups represent a stage of evolution through which other groups, more sedentarized and more Islamic, have passed (Dupire 1970: 26). Dupire's structuralist stance presupposes:

...that the various forms of marriage within a culture area can be understood as variants, or transformations, of a single underlying marriage structure.

(Burnham 1987: 39)

These two factors, degree of settlement and religious adherence, would appear to be the most important in determining the type of Fulani marriages.

However, other basic issues must also be considered in a bid to understand the differences in Fulani marriage found across West Africa. Dupire (1970: 25) has enumerated these differences as being related to: a) type of economy, b) judicial and political context, c) Islamic customs d) their African neighbours. At the same time several different 'types' of Fulani marriage can be distinguished associated with successive life cycle stages. These are betrothal, abduction, adult marriage and leviratic succession (Dupire 1970: 83).

Of the individuals interviewed in Accra, the majority had experienced betrothal marriage. For second and subsequent marriages however, the tendency was for the adults involved to have greater freedom to choose their own partners. There were no cases of marriage by abduction, although many marriages were forcibly imposed on the individuals concerned. No examples of leviratic marriage

were encountered, but there was one case of a sororate type marriage in which a young girl was forcibly married to the husband of her deceased sister.<sup>100</sup>

The Fulani of Greater Accra are mostly Muslim - some ostensibly, others devout. Most marriages are therefore performed according to Islamic custom. The order and direction of prestations in Fulani marriage ceremonies would appear to be fairly standardized. There are observable differences however related to the types of gifts given to the bride by the groom's family. These generally follow the Hausa custom of cloth, cosmetics and jewellery. Other 'Hausaized' features exist in Fulani marriage ceremonies, for instance the use of Hausa songs by the women during some weddings.

Although cattle are claimed as the norm in discussions of Fulani marriage prestations, in fact their use is not universal. Most people, particularly those who don't own cattle in the first place, find the cost of purchasing cattle prohibitive. Over half the married women in the study did however receive cattle as part of their bridewealth, either alone or in combination with money and cloth.

In principle marriage is virilocal, although two cases of uxorilocal residence were observed. Both examples involved formerly itinerant mallams (one from Burkina Faso and one from Benin), who settled to live with their wives in the compounds of their high status, wealthy parents-in-law, (see the case of Yacouba Diallo).

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<sup>100</sup> Dupire noted that: 'Even though a certain form of sororate marriage involving the younger sister is historically and structurally attested in all Fulani groups, its practice has almost entirely disappeared' (Dupire 1970: 59, my translation).

### **Age at marriage**

Of the one hundred and five men included in the study, sixty-nine (66%) had ever married. Of these, thirty-nine (43%) had experienced divorce. Twenty-two men had only had one divorce, six men two divorces and two men five divorces. Seventy-nine women in the study had ever been married. Of these women, twenty had experienced one or more divorces. Seventeen women had had one divorce, and three others between two and four divorces. The ages at which the men and women married for the first time is represented in the following table:

Table 4.1 Age at first marriage

Age group	Number of men	Number of women
Pre-teens (<13)	0	4
Teens (13-19)	11	61
20-24	16	10
25-30	31	0
31-34	2	0
35-40	6	0
40 +	1	0
Don't know	2	4
No.	69	79

Based upon respondents' claims.

This analysis makes apparent the large difference between men's and women's ages at first marriage. Women marry far younger than men. Some women even married in their pre-teens.<sup>101</sup> Most were married between the ages of thirteen and nineteen and all were married by the age of twenty-two. The majority of men married first between the ages of twenty-five and thirty.

The age at second marriage for both men and women tells a similar tale. Second marriage for some women occurs between the teens to late thirties. Men can and do take second and subsequent spouses (whether or not they have divorced their first wives) well into their fifties and beyond. The data are presented in the following table:

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<sup>101</sup> This included a nine year old, an eleven year old and a twelve year old girl.

Table 4.2 Age at second marriage<sup>102</sup>

Age group	Number of men	Number of women
Teens (13-19)	0	2
20-24	1	4
25-30	8	6
31-34	7	4
35-40	8	2
41-44	4	0
45-50	3	0
51-54	2	0
55-60	1	0
Don't know	4	3
N	38	21

Based upon respondents' claims.

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<sup>102</sup> While second and subsequent marriage for women, necessarily implies the death of their first spouse or divorce, this is obviously not the case for the men. No women in my sample married after the age of 40.

The age gap between the spouses is another indication of the disparity in men's and women's ages at first marriage. These data were difficult to glean from the women, as most professed to not knowing the age of their first and/or subsequent husbands at marriage. The married male respondents, however, were able to discuss age disparities between themselves and their (often far younger) wives. The mean age gap between husbands and wives at first marriage is twelve years. There is however significant variation as the following table illustrates:



Table 4.3: Age gap between husbands & wives at first marriage

(Men, N=69)

Age gap	Frequency
< 5 years	25
6-10	14
11-15	18
16-20	6
21-25	3
Don't know	3

For second and subsequent marriages, the mean age gap between spouses were as follows:

Table 4.4 Mean age gap of spouses

(Men, N=69)

Marriage	Age gap (years)
1 <sup>ST</sup> Marriage	12
2 <sup>nd</sup> Marriage	19
3 <sup>rd</sup> Marriage	20
4 <sup>th</sup> Marriage	20

## **Polygyny**

Islamic attitudes toward plural marriage coincide closely with the norms of many African communities.

(Burnham 1987: 47)

As expected, the mean age gap between the spouses increases with second and subsequent marriages. According to Islamic dictates men may marry up to four wives concurrently, and can choose their wives from a pool of young girls, irrespective of their own age. Of the sample of women ever married, 54% had one or more co-wives. Most of these (eighteen women) had one co-wife, four women had two co-wives and three women, three co-wives. Of the eighty women ever married in the sample, sixty-one were currently married. The rest were either widowed or divorced.

Table 4.5 Women's current number of co-wives

(N=61)

Present number of co-wives	Percent
0	60%
1	29%
2	6%
3	5%
Total	100%

The current number of wives of the men in the sample is as follows:

Table 4.6 Men's present number of wives

(N=69)

Number of wives	Number of men
0	34*
1	45
2	33
3	13
4	6
5	1
7	1

\*Of the thirty-four men (who had no wives at the time of interview) these included twenty-three individuals under the age of 25. In the sample as a whole, of those men ever married, more than three-quarters married over the age of twenty-five.

For men, the ability to have several wives appears to be an indication of their wealth and status. Rich men may choose to take more wives. Poor men may not be able to afford any. Therefore economic considerations are important in a man's ability to take a second or third wife (cf. Burnham 1987: 46-47).

Mamane (whose story follows) is a case in point. He has amassed enough wealth over the course of his life in his various ventures (farming, contract cattle herding) to be able to afford several wives.

### *Mamane's many wives*

Mamane Tal is sixty-nine years old. He was born in Sokoto in Northern Nigeria. At present he is resident in Ochibleku on the Accra plains. He is a farmer as well as a herder. When he was thirty years old, he left Nigeria for Niger. In Niger he got a contract to herd cattle from Niamey to Bawku in the Upper Eastern Region of Ghana. From then until the present day he has lived in various regions of Ghana. He always travelled alone. He has worked as a hired herdsman as well as a farmer and spent over five years breaking stones for sale.

Mamane has been married five times. His first and second marriages took place in Sokoto, the subsequent three in Ochibleku. He was related to his first wife, Hajo, although he could not specify how. They divorced after five years. His second wife, Hawa a Fulani, left him. In Ochibleku at the age of fifty he married again, more than twenty-five years after his previous marriage. His third wife, Maimuna, was an Adangme, from Ada. After one year her father came and took her away. Mamane's fourth and fifth marriages took place within a week of each other when he was fifty-five years old. His fourth wife, Amina was a young Gonja girl of seventeen. His fifth Hausa wife, Ramatu, was older than Mamane although he did not know by how many years. Amina left Mamane after six years of marriage. Ramatu left after they had been married for ten years. Mamane has seven children.

Several important themes emerge from Mamane's case study. First, it illustrates the relative ease with which a man can travel and re-marry, should he have the financial means to do so. Secondly, Mamane's story indicates a fairly typical range of acceptable marriage partners. While his first marriage with a relative was arranged for him, he had complete control over his second and subsequent marriages. His second wife was a Fulani (not related), his third was a local Ga Adangbe woman from

southern Ghana, his fourth wife was Gonja (northern Ghanaian),<sup>103</sup> his fifth Hausa, of unknown birthplace.<sup>104</sup> Mamane's fifth wife was older than him, although Mamane had no idea by how many years. This was the only case I encountered of a man marrying an older woman.

The following case is of a man at the other extreme. Hama has always been so poor, that he has been unable to afford to marry, even once. He also appears to lack the social skills and confidence to interact with other Fulani or other local groups in Greater Accra. He remains childless and isolated.

### *Hama Kadiri*

Hama is about sixty years old. He was born in Doori, Burkina Faso. He lives in Ogbodjo, outside of New Madina where he herds (other people's cattle) and farms for his own subsistence. He has no formal education but has studied the Koran a little.

At the age of twenty, during President Nkrumah's time (between 1953 and 1966) Hama left his parental home in Burkina and came to Ghana to look for work. He came straight to New Madina and travelled alone. He had no travel documents and knew no-one before he arrived.

Hama stayed in New Madina for five years. During President Acheampong's time (between 1972 and 1979) he went to live in Madina where he stayed until 1994, when he relocated to his present site of Ogbodjo. He has never been back to Burkina Faso and has never travelled outside of the country since coming to Ghana.

Unusually, Hama has never married and has no children. He said that his father gave him one cow when he was seven years old but he sold it and 'chopped'<sup>105</sup> the money. He said that he used to attend *suudu-baaba* meetings in Madina but recently, when he was sick and needed money, they didn't give him any so he decided to leave. Hama speaks only Fulfulde and Hausa. He speaks no local Ghanaian languages despite his long residence in Southern Ghana. He is a loner and has no family. He seems very poor and isolated.

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<sup>103</sup> The case of Amina is an exception to the Gonjas aversion to marrying Fulani as observed by Jack Goody referred to earlier (J.Goody 1969: 167).

<sup>104</sup> It is not known whether Mamane's fifth wife was born in Ghana or elsewhere.

<sup>105</sup> 'Chopped' is Ghanaian English slang for devoured, ate, squandered. It can also be used to mean have sex with.

Apart from never having married and being childless, another indication of Hama's unusual predicament is the fact that he speaks no languages apart from Hausa and Fulfulde. Given his long residence in the Madina area the fact that he hasn't even picked up some Ga or Twi is exceptional. There is obviously a correlation between socio-economic status and wealth on the one hand and the ability to have a marriage arranged on the other. Well-placed men are better able to arrange marriages with girls from well-off families.

Dupire (1970: 79) noted that polygyny is a universal feature of Fulani marriage. She stressed, however, that it varies considerably in frequency between different Fulani groups and offered two main reasons for this: first the type of livelihood that a group engages in and secondly the influence of their neighbouring ethnic groups. These operate at a theoretical level of abstraction and Dupire (1970: 80) acknowledges that it is impossible to isolate and independently explain these two factors. The general trend however is for groups which are more sedentarized to be more islamized and for such groups, especially when heavily influenced by similar neighbours, to be more polygynous.

The situation in Greater Accra is complex and it would be difficult to establish whether the rates of polygyny observed in this sample are relatively high or low. The factors that Dupire isolated, - Islam, sedentarization, pastoralism and the influence of the neighbours, - are impossible to disentangle in attempting to analyse the rate of Fulani polygyny in Accra.

Within one family, and within one domestic residential unit, individuals engage in very different forms of livelihood. Some individuals may be cattle-herders, who periodically leave for the bush. Others may be traders who travel long distances selling their wares. Others may be islamic teachers and others school teachers in the formal education system. Over the life-course of any one individual, shifts can and do occur

between occupations and between residences (rural and urban) and therefore changes occur in the type of influence that neighbouring groups may exert upon them.<sup>106</sup>

## Divorce

A high divorce rate is claimed to be characteristic of all Fulani populations (Riesman 1974: 212). This sample is apparently no exception. Of the sixty-nine men who had ever been married, thirty-nine (43%) had experienced divorce: twenty-two had divorced once, six twice and two men five times. Of seventy-nine women who had ever been married, twenty (25%) had experienced one or more divorces: seventeen women had divorced once and the other three between two and four times.

From her comparative analysis of Fulani marriage, Dupire (1970: 7) noted some universal features of Fulani divorce. First of all she highlighted the general ease and frequency with which Fulani marriage can be dissolved, secondly, the higher frequency of divorce among the 'nomads', as compared with the settled populations, Dupire's third insight into divorce is the fact that, among pastoralists groups who transmit herds between generations, it is most common at the beginning and at the end of the marriage cycle. She terms this the 'zone d'instabilité'.<sup>107</sup> She attributes this zone of instability to the fact that the aims of marriage among the Fulani are reproduction and intergenerational transmission of goods and wealth. Note that in my sample I found no women marrying over the age of forty.

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<sup>106</sup> See Chapter Three for further discussion on changes in occupation over the life-course, and changes in response to fluctuating fortunes.

<sup>107</sup> The instability of Fulani marriage was also documented by Quechon 1985 in Cameroon.

Many of the cases of short-lived marriage encountered in the ensuing case studies are childless. Ramata Keita, the 'runaway bride', fled her unhappy marriage soon after the death of her premature baby. Hadiza Tal, whose husband was (in her own words) 'strict', had no children at the time of her divorce after ten years of marriage. Her husband, more than forty years her senior, had never fathered children, despite having been married several times. Abdullai Diallo divorced his French, childless wife. His subsequent marriages were more stable and produced children.

Dupire (1970: 52) noted that through marriage a man acquires procreative rights over his wife, as well as her domestic and sexual services.<sup>108</sup> She believed also that once this was complete, through the bearing of one or more children, then the parents could separate without harming the social order (Dupire 1970: 77). As to the welfare of the children when a couple divorces, men are seen as the begetters of children and in general it is with the men that children reside on the divorce of their parents.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, divorce does not mean that the ties between a mother and her children are severed, only the ones between a wife and her husband (Riesman 1974: 82). Chapter Five will elaborate upon discussions of child-care arrangements in particular and socialization in general.

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<sup>108</sup> 'Par le mariage l'homme acquiert d'abord des droits sur la faculté procréatrice de sa femme, puis sur ses services domestiques et sexuels. Le mariage Peul met l'accent sur la fécondité du couple, assurée par des rites sympathétiques... plutôt que sur la fécondité féminine' (Dupire 1970: 52).

<sup>109</sup> There is a fair amount of fluidity in the living arrangements of children once their parents divorce. Depending on the age of the child and the local circumstances, the child may reside with paternal grandparents, siblings, guardians or other relatives.



## Arranged marriages: Force & free will

We find, in all Fulani groups, the existence of traces of a type of betrothal marriage arranged by the families.

(Dupire 1970: 25, my translation)

Dupire's comparative study of various Fulani groups found they all shared a type of marriage system marked by a period of engagement or betrothal, and arranged by the respective families. However, as Riesman has stressed in relation to the Djelgobe of Burkina Faso,

Being married to someone is not a matter of fate but a question of personal choice, even in marriages arranged by the parents, since those who wish to can always get a divorce.

(Riesman 1974: 216)

Stenning (1959) stressed the importance of the agnatic lineage group<sup>110</sup> and the characteristics and functions of lineages in pastoral Fulani society, in particular their control over the younger generations. Among the Wodaabe, for example, a major characteristic of the lineage group was, '...its control of the marriages of both its male and female members, particularly the first marriages by which families and herds were set up' (Stenning 1959: 42).

This 'control', exerted over the young by older members of the lineage, appears to play a significant part today in determining the spouses of Fulani men and women in Accra. There is no antithesis, however, between free-choice and arrangement. Marriages can be arranged, and outwardly controlled, by elders, but still be to the liking of the couple, who may even have influenced their choice of spouse.

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<sup>110</sup> '...a lineage group had a name which usually referred to its component household heads as the agnatic descendants of a common ancestor generally not more than three ascending generations removed' (Stenning 1959: 38).

There is much flexibility in who arranges marriages (grandparents, parents, guardians, couple), how they are arranged (from near or afar, through delegating responsibilities or directly becoming involved), and in what manner they are arranged. These differences are apparent between different specific cases as well as between different classes (dependant upon wealth and socio-economic status). For second and subsequent marriages both men and women have a greater freedom to choose their partners. Ramatu Diko is a case in point.

### *Ramatu Diko remarries*

Although she was not related to her first husband (a Zabarama from Niger) Ramatu had no choice in the union. When she and her first husband divorced she remarried six years later. She is now happily married to a Hausa businessman in Accra. She said, 'If you marry for a second time, you choose him.'

Irrespective of location or clan affiliation, the influence of the older generation in arranging the marriages of the Fulani men and women interviewed was striking. The table below presents the data on the percentage of first, second and third marriages that were arranged.

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Table 4.7: Percent of marriages in each category that were arranged

Marriage	(N)	Men	(N)	Women
1 <sup>st</sup> Marriage	31/69	45%	67/79	85%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Marriage	9/38	24%	7/21	33%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Marriage	1/14	7%	-	-

Both men and women are subject to arranged marriages. However there is a marked disparity in their experiences. For the women, 84% of first marriages were arranged. For men this figure was 45%. An important point to note, and one that is often underrepresented in the literature, is the fact that men also have marriages arranged for them.

In any one union, whether a marriage is considered arranged or not may vary for the man and the woman. The man may have chosen his bride, but from the bride's point of view, she may have had little or no choice in selecting her husband. Another point is the fact that men may be less inclined to admit to the fact that their marriage was arranged.

The groom's presence is not required on the day of the wedding, and family representatives hold all discussions of betrothal on behalf of the bride and groom. Sometimes, as the following case illustrates, the men are not even notified about their marriages.

### *The case of the unwitting groom*

'I was in the bush and was sent a letter from my father saying that I should come home - I thought that someone was ill. I got there to find that there was a woman in my room wearing white! The marriage had already been made! My father thought that if he did this then I would stay at home! For one week after I arrived I slaughtered a ram each morning. On the eighth day I left [Mopti in Mali] for Abidjan. Whilst I was away I used to send her [my wife] presents. After six months I sent my brother back to Mopti to go and bring her to join me in Abidjan.'

This is the story of Sulaimana Sisogo, a Malian griot. He married Aissatu six years ago and they are still together. He was in his mid-twenties at the time, his bride was just eleven or twelve years of age. They currently live in Abidjan and have a three year old son.

In this particular case the bride and groom were not related, but the groom's father arranged for his son to marry the daughter of one of his best friends. So far their marriage has lasted, many other arranged marriages have not.

Should an arranged marriage prove unhappy, one solution is to flee.<sup>111</sup> Riesman (1974: 212), in reference to the Djelgobe, discussed what he termed the 'provisional' nature of Fulani marriage. He noted that from the point of view of the women, although marriage entails submission to one's husband, this is not a permanent state. His argument is that there are always men interested in women, therefore from the point of view of other men, what matters is not a woman's status (married or not) but rather her intrinsic value. The most beautiful women acquire reputations which, 'go far beyond the borders of their own localities' (Riesman 1974: 216). He posits that should she choose to do so, a woman can use this knowledge (of her high esteem and desirability) to either escape her husband or to dominate him. In other words she knows that she has the potential to free herself.

Although the man usually brings divorce proceedings, stories of married women running away from unhappy arranged unions were not uncommon among the women interviewed. Hadiza Tal told me her story of why she and her husband divorced. She also said that at the time of her marriage, she had 'ten' other suitors:

'We divorced because he was too strict. He had money, he even gave my father a car - a Peugeot - but me, he wouldn't give me anything. The only thing he did for me was send me to Mecca when I was nineteen years old...We didn't have a child...

He didn't want me to go out of the house...one day, someone told him that they had seen me outside [in the street]. He told me to take the lorry fare [cost of transport] and go home...He didn't know but I packed all my things and left. Two weeks later he brought the divorce note. After six months, he wanted me to go back to him, I said no way!'

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<sup>111</sup> Little (1973: 28), in discussing 'independent' African women and their strategies and options for migration, noted that unmarried girls who run away, and married women who flee and desert their husbands, are not necessarily in any way 'deviant' or uncommon. Rather this desire to escape unhappy circumstances is shared by many women, young and old, literate and illiterate alike. He observed that often the aims and objectives of these women are far from specific and clear, rather they simply want to have greater control over their lives and destinies.

By the time she was twenty-five Hadiza was divorced, although she is now about thirty-five years old she has never re-married and remains childless. She lives with her mother in her (deceased father's) compound in New Madina.

In their youth some of the older women had taken their destinies into their own hands and left their husbands, as had several of the young girls (see 'The case of the Runaway Bride', Ramata from Gabon). The following story (Jeho's Journey) is perhaps one of the most intrepid.

### *Jeho's journeys*<sup>112</sup>

Jeho Hassan is reputed to be over one hundred years old. When she was about thirteen years old, she was sent from her home in Niger to Sokoto, northwestern Nigeria, to marry one of the sons of the Sultan of Sokoto. She made the journey on horseback. In Sokoto she was kept in purdah in the Sultan's palace. Jeho had many children, all but one of whom died in a measles epidemic. After several years of marriage, she tired of life in the palace and planned her escape with one of her co-wives. Her husband had taken a third wife and had begun to neglect Jeho and her co-wife. She had saved some money from the regular amount her husband gave her to use to pay for her portion of the domestic food supply. She fled to (the present day) Republic of Benin where she settled. She remarried and subsequently divorced and eventually migrated and remarried in Accra, where she now resides. She currently lives with her classificatory granddaughter who is herself a grandmother.

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<sup>112</sup> Although I spoke with Jeho on several occasions, I was never able to obtain a full and detailed life history as I had for the other women in the sample. She soon tired after conversing with me for a while and grew a little restless and distressed at her fading and sometimes confused memory. In respect of her age and frailty I talked with her only a few times. This part of her life she willingly shared with me.

*An elderly lady, reposing under a tree*



While the tale that Jeho told took place a long time ago, the following example of a young bride escaping an unhappy union had taken place weeks prior to our meeting.

***Ramata Keita: The case of the runaway bride***

Ramata is eighteen years old and was born in Gabon. When she was just three years old her father died. Upon the death of her husband, Ramata's mother took her children back to Mali whence she came originally.

At the age of seventeen, Ramata was given in marriage (against her will) to her father's father's brother's son (*bibbe baaba*). Her father's brother arranged the marriage. Her husband, Mamane, already had one wife. Ramata went to join her husband in Côte d'Ivoire, where he lives and works as a cloth trader. Ramata had one child, a boy, Dawda, born prematurely at seven months. Dawda died when he was just one month old.

Ramata had been telling her husband for a while that she wanted to come to Ghana to visit her elder brother, whom she had not seen since she was a baby and did not know. Her husband refused, so Ramata ran away to come to find her brother, Mukhtar, in Ghana, arriving one month before this interview took place. She came alone and had no travel documents, she bribed her way across the Ivoirian - Ghanaian international border. She did not know how long she would stay in Ghana. She had not wished to marry Mamane in the first place and was very unhappy in Abidjan with her husband and her co-wife.

Ramata Keita, like many strong Fulani women before her, refused to accept her unhappy situation and ran away from her husband. I do not know what became of her; whether she stayed in Ghana or returned to Abidjan; whether her husband came to look for her in Accra or whether he decided to leave her be.

It is not only women who sometimes use mobility as a way of escaping miserable marriages, men do too.



### *The case of the reluctant groom*

At the age of seventeen Gede, a young Burkina Be herdsman, was betrothed in marriage to his cross-cousin, (his father's sister's daughter). Fatimata, his bride to be, was thirteen years of age. Gede's mother made all the customary marriage arrangements, buying four rams, and rearing them for a period of two years before the wedding to make sure that they were large, well fed and presentable.

Gede was against this arrangement from the start and refused to marry Fatimata. To protest this arrangement and escape the grasp of his family, he left home alone and went to Abidjan. There he lived and worked as a farmer for four years and seven months. After this period of time his mother came in search of him. She took him back to their hometown of Kaya in Burkina Faso where he was to marry Fatimata. By this time (1981) he was twenty-one years of age and his bride was seventeen. His father's brother's daughters went off to make the final marriage arrangements and to bring back his bride who was a three-day journey away. Thus Gede reluctantly started married life.

Gede stayed with his wife for a year but then left, never to return. They never officially divorced but, as he pointed out, if you stay away for four or five years then everyone takes this as a divorce. When Gede left his wife, she was pregnant, he left before she gave birth. To this day he doesn't know the sex of his child, let alone his or her name.

Four years after abandoning Fatima, Gede (by then twenty-five years of age) met and married his second wife, Hadija. This time, he arranged the marriage himself. Hadija, then seventeen, was not related to him, but was however from his hometown. They met and married in Ashaiman near Accra. They have four children all of whom are living with them.

The period of time needed to elapse in order for a marriage to be considered annulled appears to be ill defined. In Gede's case he decided that four or five years was sufficient time for a divorce to be granted.

## **Family marriage**

...among the Fulani...people insist over and over that they are all one. Their marriage system, in fact works in that direction in that the high percentage of endogamous unions...tends to multiply the number of

kinship ties between people, with the result that most people turn out to be related to each other in several ways at the same time.

(Riesman 1974: 33)

The findings of earlier writers and of this study demonstrate unequivocally the extent to which Fulani family endogamy continually multiplies family ties<sup>113</sup> Stenning (1959: 46). In his discussion of the Wodaabe of Northern Nigeria, Stenning noted that they regard their endogamous system of marriage as one of the 'cornerstones' of their traditional morality.<sup>114</sup>

There is no Fulfulde word that corresponds to the English word 'family' (Dupire 1970: 86). The phrase *yimbe wuro*, translated by Dupire as, 'les gens du campement' (the people of the camp) indicates those who 'live together', it is therefore a socio-geographic term which designates a residential unit. *Yimbe* means 'people' and *wuro* represents the smallest social unit capable of meeting its members' needs. The root *wur* means 'live'. The concept of *wuro* necessarily implies a group of people. Riesman (1974: 30) translates it as 'community' as well as a 'basic living unit'. This group of people could be a husband and wife living together or a group of travellers who meet up for the night. Men and women can be members of several *gure* (plural) simultaneously. *Wuro* is not an enduring element of social structure (as is a lineage or generation) which is determined at birth, rather it has an ephemeral quality, since once its members disband it ceases to exist. There is an element of choice in an individual's belonging to a *wuro*, in contrast to the absence of choice in the case of lineage membership.

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<sup>113</sup> See Cantrelle & Dupire 1964, endogamy in Fouta Djallon.

<sup>114</sup> He went as far as to say that they regard this system as the main practice which distinguishes them both physically and culturally from non-Fulani. Stenning also stressed the importance of the agnatic lineage group '...a lineage group had a name which usually referred to its component household heads as the agnatic descendants of a common ancestor generally not more than three ascending generations removed' (Stenning 1959: 38). A major characteristic of the lineage group among the Wodaabe was the fact that spouses were found for its members from among the lineage group or from others who were related agnatically (Stenning 1959: 42).

Burnham, however, cautions that, '...we should not take the household boundary as the natural limit for a man's influence over his kin; affines continue to be of crucial political economic significance in many African societies whether they are housed under one roof or not' (Burnham 1987: 45). Therefore despite the Fulani equivalent of the word 'family' being a residential and spatially defined unit, family influences go far beyond the confines of the living unit.

In the present study, no less than forty-six percent of the first marriages of the men and women interviewed were family marriages. In twenty-seven percent of cases the genealogical connection between the bride and groom could be traced. A further eighteen percent knew that their marriages were 'family' marriages but could not specify the exact genealogical link. The 'types' of family marriage unions encountered have been classified in the following table:

Table 4.8 Types & frequency of family marriage for first marriages<sup>115</sup>

(From husband's perspective)

Type of family marriage	Diagram	Men (N)	Women (N)	Men & women (%)
Patrilateral parallel cousin (Full & classificatory) <i>Bibbe baaba</i>		10	8	12%
Patrilateral cross cousin (Full & classificatory) <i>Bii goggo – bii kawo</i>		6	2	6%
Matrilateral cross cousin (Full & classificatory) <i>Bii kawo- bii goggo</i>		4	8	8%
Matrilateral parallel cousin (Full & classificatory) <i>Bibbe inna</i>		1	1	1%
Other related - unspecified		16	10	18%
No relationship		32	48	54%
Don't know			2	1%
Total		69	79	100%

<sup>115</sup> I comment on the disparity between men's and women's reported rates of family marriage in a note to Table 4.10.

Stenning (1959: 42-46) classified the ten preferred types of family marriage encountered among the Wodaabe in the past. Excluding those individuals who were related to their spouses but could not specify how, the general preferred types of marriage among the Fulani of Accra are similar to those observed by Stenning forty years ago. The most desired type of family marriage for both the men and the women was patrilateral parallel cousin marriage, *bibbe baaba* (both full (Stenning's type one) and classificatory (Stenning's types two and three)). These types of marriage represented 12% of all the different types of first marriage, and 26% of those first marriages that were specifically family marriages. Ramata Keita (see 'The case of the runaway bride) is a case in point.

**Table 4.9 Preferential marriage among pastoral Fulani after Stenning**  
(Stenning 1959: 42-46)

Type of marriage	Diagram	Characteristics
1. Patrilateral parallel cousins		A most important form of marriage is that between the son and daughter of two brothers or half-brothers. In this type of marriage, partners trace descent to a common grandfather through male links. The marriage partners are patrilateral parallel cousins or 'children of uncles' ( <i>bibbe wappanbe</i> )
2. Classificatory patrilateral parallel cousins		The marriage partners may trace their descent through male links to a common great-grandfather. The fathers of the marriage partners are actual patrilateral parallel cousins, while the marriage partners themselves are classificatory patrilateral parallel cousins ( <i>bibbe baaba'en, sing. bii baaba</i> ).
3. The fathers of the marriage partners may be classificatory patrilateral parallel cousins.		The partners have a common male ancestor more than 3 generations removed. They are of common agnatic descent.
4. Patrilateral cross-cousins		The marriage partners trace descent to a common grandfather, but the female marriage partner does so through her mother
5. Classificatory patrilateral cross-cousins		Their common descent is traced to a great-grandfather, that of the wife through her mother.
6. Putative patrilateral cross-cousins		Descent is traced to a common male ancestor at more than 3 ascending generations, the female marriage partner tracing it either through (a) her mother or (b) through the mother of her father or grandfather.
7. Matrilateral cross-cousins		Partners trace descent to a common grandfather, the male marriage partner doing so through his mother. A man marries his mother's brother's daughter ( <i>bii kawo</i> ), while a woman marries her father's sister's son ( <i>bii goggo</i> )
8. Classificatory matrilateral cross-cousins		They trace descent to a common great-grandfather, the husband through his mother.
9 Putative classificatory matrilateral cross-cousins		Their common male ancestor is more than 3 generations removed, while the male partner traces his descent through (a) his own mother (b) or through his father's or father's father's mother.
10. Same clan		Neither the marriage partners nor their fathers can trace common descent, but are aware that the lineage groups to which they belong do intermarry; that is to say, belong to the same clan.

Matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages (both full and classificatory) were the second and third preferred types of marriage in my sample. Eight percent of my sample (twelve individuals) had contracted matrilateral cross-cousin first marriages (types 7-9 of Stenning's typology); a further six percent (eight individuals) had contracted patrilateral cross-cousin marriages (types 4-6 in Stenning's typology).

When broken down by sex, the percentages of family marriages, for first and subsequent marriages, are as follows:

Table 4.10 Percent family marriages

Marriage	Men	Women
1 <sup>st</sup> Marriage	54%*	39%*
2 <sup>nd</sup> Marriage	21%	19%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Marriage	20%	-

\*\*There is a marked difference in the reported rates of family marriage for the men and women. This could be accounted for by a number of different factors. First of all I tried to avoid interviewing married couples about a marriage which was the first for both. Secondly more men than women in the sample were born outside of Ghana, in their countries of origin, where presumably more 'family' kin are available for marriage. Inversely for women born in Ghana the pool of husbands who are close kin is smaller. Thirdly women are more likely to travel outside of Greater Accra and Ghana to join their husbands (particularly in the cases of arranged first marriages to close kin) than men, thus disqualifying them from the sample.



Over half (54%) of all the married men were related to their first wife in some way. For the women, nearly 40% of their first marriages were within the family. The percentage of family marriages decreases dramatically with second and subsequent marriages. 'Fatumata's family marriage' is a typical example of patrilateral, cross-cousin marriage,

### *Fatumata's family marriage*

Fatumata is eighteen years old, and was born in Mali.<sup>116</sup> Fatumata lived with her parents in Mali until she was weaned, at about age two, when she was fostered by her father's sister. She lived with her father's sister and her father's sister's family in Mali for seven years until she was about nine years old. Then her father's sister's family relocated to Ghana and brought Fatumata with them. They moved to Nima, Accra.

When she was seventeen years old, Fatumata was given in marriage by her father's sister's husband to her father's sister's son, Bailo Bah, who was then twenty-three years old. They married in Nima. Fatumata therefore continues to live with her father's sister (who is now also her mother-in-law).

As Stenning states of his typology,

'The lineage group aims, primarily, at keeping a young woman to betroth her to one of its own young men (marriage types 1 and 2). Secondly, it passes her on to a lineage group which is believed to be related agnatically (marriage type 3). Thirdly, it uses the connections established by the marriages of its own women, and takes spouses from the lineage groups into which they have married (marriage types 4,5,6). Finally, the agnatic descent group looks for spouses to the lineage groups from which its wives have been drawn (marriage types 7,8,9)' (Stenning 1959: 45-46).

There are different implications for the inheritance of property and cattle for each of these types of marriage. However keeping these (property and cattle)

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<sup>116</sup> At first Fatumata told me that her clan name was Bah, because the man who had raised her as a child, her father's sister's husband is Bah and he was in the room at the start of the interview. For fear of offending him she used his clan name as her clan name. However when he left the room, she told me that her clan name is in fact Nyan.

within the control of the lineage group would appear to be important. However, even the 'same' type of marriage may have different implications under different circumstances. For example patrilateral cross cousin marriage may have practical implications and significance for cattle-keeping Fulani but may be more a matter of prestige in an urban setting. In relation to cattle, Riesman (1974: 38) noted that each domestic animal is the property of a specified individual. From birth, girls and boys begin to establish ownership of their own animals. At the name-giving ceremony aunts and uncles (both maternal and paternal) bestow gifts on the new-borns.

Upon marriage, the transfer of rights over the woman is symbolized by means of cattle, *futteeji*.<sup>117</sup> These cattle are intended for the new bride herself and are initially kept with her father's herds. Later (once she has had her own children and it seems likely that the marriage will last and her husband has established himself independently of his own father) they are often transferred to her husband's herds (Riesman 1974: 82). The danger here of course is that once a woman's cattle are placed with those of her husband, he can, should he choose to, decide to dispose of them. This happened in the case of Ousmana Hama, who sold his wife's cattle when he needed the money.

Whether the pressures to marry within the family are imposed upon couples and individuals from within the family or are self imposed is sometimes difficult to ascertain. More men than women are first generation migrants and many had married according to family dictates before migrating. Alhaji Diallo married each of his three wives back in his country of origin, Burkina Faso, despite the fact that he was himself resident in New Madina, Ghana. He was related to all of his wives.

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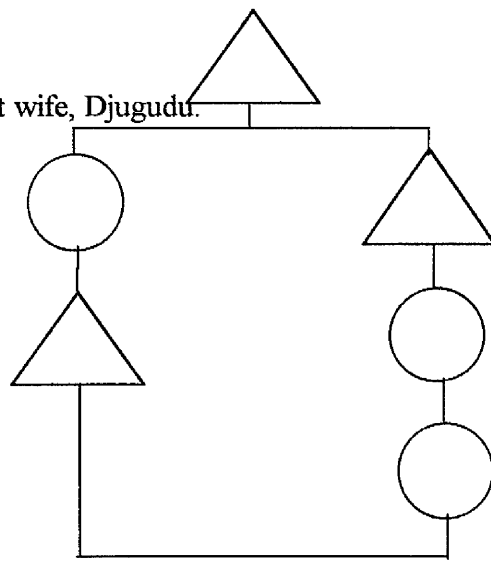
<sup>117</sup> As previously noted, half of the married women in the sample were given

***Alhaji Diallo & his brides from Burkina***

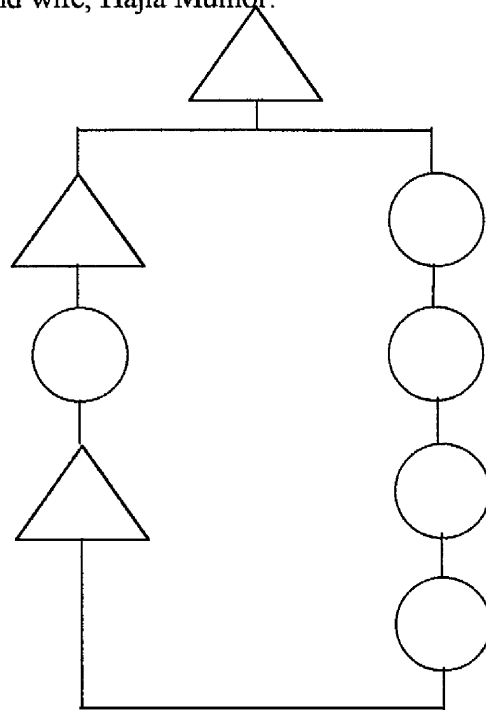
Alhaji Diallo (see Chapter Two) left his home town of Mardarga in Burkina Faso in the late 1920s. Since leaving home in his teens, he has lived variously in Ghana, Togo and Benin. His most permanent residence however has been in New Madina, Greater Accra, Ghana. Alhaji Diallo has married three times. Each of the marriages was a family marriage and each took place in Burkina Faso, despite his own residence being in Ghana. After being resident in Ghana for several years, Diallo returned to Burkina to marry Djugudu, his mother's brother's daughter's daughter.

After their marriage, Djugudu was resident in Burkina for a further two years before she joined her husband in Ghana. Six years after his first marriage, Alhaji Diallo took a second wife, Mumor. Later, he took a third.

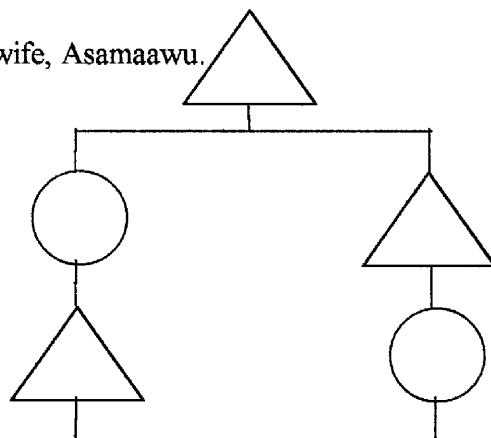
Alhaji Diallo's first wife, Djugudu.



Alhaji Diallo's second wife, Hajia Mumor.



Alhaji Diallo's third wife, Asamaawu.



It is particularly the first generation migrants to Accra, like Alhaji Diallo, who go back home to marry their kinswomen, or have their wives 'sent' to them after the official marriage ceremony has been carried out. Fulani women resident in Accra are also often sent to their countries of origin in order to marry. Increasingly - among second and subsequent generations - these alliances, based upon country of origin, are being replaced by local Ghanaian-based transnational unions as we shall see in the section entitled 'New Madina Alliances'.

## **Non-family marriage**

Of the total number of first marriages for both men and women, fifty-four percent were between unrelated individuals. Three distinct categories of non-family marriage exist:- 1) the couple are not directly related but belong to the same clan and are therefore both Fulani, 2) they belong to different clans but are both Fulani, 3) one spouse is not Fulani.

### **Marriages within clan and ethnic group**

Agnatic lineage groups are linked to form clans by putative agnatic relationships of their several male ancestors...the clan...is a unit of co-operation with regard to cattle and labour.

(Stenning 1959: 5)

Second and subsequent generations (of 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani) may not have the opportunity of going back home in order to marry. For many individuals, Ghana is home. In some instances however despite having been born and brought up in Ghana, young women are sent to kinsmen in other countries to marry. The following case study represents a marriage between non-related Fulani in Accra.

*Aminata Abubakar*

Aminata is twenty-one years old. She is a daughter of the late Alhaji Barry. She grew up in her father's compound in New Madina with her siblings (both full and half-paternal). In 1996 she married Ali, a graduate economist who works at the Ministry of Finance. I asked Aminata how she met her husband and she told me this story.

'I went to visit my brother [actually her mother's sister's husband's son] at school [University of Legon]. He [Ali] was my brother's friend. When he (Ali) completed school he came to stay in Madina. I again came to visit my brother. He saw me and said that he was interested in me. He went to inform his father that he had met me. I told my mother and she said that as long as I love him [it is all right by her].'

On the 2 March 1996 a delegation of Ali's father's brother's and neighbours came to her brother's house (bearing Kola nuts and toffees) to inform Aminata's family that Ali wanted to marry her. They were asked to bring 100,000 cedis on 16 March. On the day they came with the money, they set the wedding date for 3 December. They discussed cattle. They brought the cow in January to join her family's herds in Fownde (Volta Region). The *lefe* (Hausa for the clothes, and other gifts, given to the bride by the bridegroom before the wedding ceremony) was also brought <sup>118</sup> by his neighbours from Koforidua (he has no sisters or mother). On the day of the wedding Aminata was taken to Koforidua. There she spent three months in her husband's father's house. After three months she returned to Madina where she and her husband have rented a room.

Although Aminata and her husband freely 'chose' each other and 'fell in love', and were in no way pressured into marrying each other by their families, at the same time they succeeded in conforming to the wishes of their families in choosing suitable partners.

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<sup>118</sup> 8 cloths, 4 *dukus* (Akan for headtie), 6 *mayafi* (veils), 2 pairs of sandals, 1 pair of slippers, 1 towel, 1 sponge, soap for bathing, soap for washing, perfumes, body pomade, cosmetics, a bucket, a large round enamel bowl in which all the things were placed, *lele* (henna) and a bowl.

## **Ethnically exogamous marriage**

Of the eighty-one women married in the sample, six of them married non-Fulani. One married a Chamba, one woman married a Ga man, one a Wangara, and three women married Zabarama men. Nine men had married non-Fulani women in their first marriages.<sup>119</sup> All but the Akan, French and Ewe women were muslim. In other words less than 10 percent of the total number of first marriages of men and women were to non-Fulani and the majority of these were to other Muslims.

Abdullai Diallo, whose story follows, chose a wide range of different marriage partners:

### *Abdullai Diallo*

Abdullai Diallo is fifty-one years old. He was born in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. He lives in Nima where he trades in salt, maize and timber between Ghana and Burkina Faso. He spent his childhood and most of his early adulthood in Burkina with his parents. At the age of forty-four, he left home to become a cattle trader in Nigeria and Ghana. He has no formal education and has studied the Koran a little.

Abdullai has been married four times. His first wife was a French woman from Lyon. He married her when he was twenty-two years old and she was about twenty. They divorced after two years. She did not convert to Islam and they divorced because: 'The white woman didn't want me to take a second wife.' They had no children.

He married his second wife, Barkima when he was twenty-nine years old. She was thirteen. Barkima was Abdullai's mother's brother's daughter. After fifteen years of marriage, they divorced. They had two children, Fati, and Halimatou. Abdullai knew nothing about the marriage until after it was completed. 'I don't know...when it was arranged, I was in Abidjan.'

While still married to Barkima, and when he was over forty, Abdullai took a third wife, Safiatu. Safiatu was a sixteen year old Wangara girl from Burkina. They were together for seven years

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<sup>119</sup> One wife from each of the following ethnic groups: Akan, Bassari, Berber, Ewe, French, Hausa, Konda, Tambura, Wangara.

and then she died in 1988. Safiatu and Abdullai had one child, Alhassan. 'When I first saw her (Safiatu), she was in school. So I looked after her for three years before marrying her.'

In 1988 at the age of forty-two (while still married to Safiatu) Abdullai took a fourth wife, Fati. They are still married and live together in Accra. Fati sells *wagashi*. She is a Fulani, a Bah. They are not related. They have one child.

Abdullai's first wife was a non-Muslim and a non-Fulani. His second wife was his cross cousin (therefore Fulani and family). His third wife was muslim, non-Fulani and his fourth was Fulani, a non-relative. Marrying non-muslim women is rare and is frowned upon in the Fulani and muslim community at large, as the following case illustrates,

### *Ousmana Hama*

Ousmana is forty-five years old. He was born in Sira Khatoum, Niger, his clan name is Daranke. He lives in Odumse, near Dodowa, with his wives and some of his children. He herds cattle and farms.

Ousmana grew up with his mother and father in Niger and was herding there until the age of eighteen when he left his natal home to travel to Ghana to visit his mother's full brother, Alhaji Tal. He travelled from Sira to Ghana with his mother. He stayed with this uncle for six months before returning to Niger. He maintains that when he first came, he had no intention of staying, he had simply come on a visit. During those six months, he worked hard without rest, looking after his uncle's cattle. There were five cattle kraals to be looked after.

On returning to Niger, after the six months in Ghana, Ousmana farmed and herded. However his uncle Tal (his mother's brother) asked him to come back to Ghana, which he did the following year in about 1972. After his visit to Ghana, when he was around twenty years old, Ousmana got married in Sira. His mother and father arranged this marriage for him. He was not related to his wife. For a period of twenty years Ousmana divided his time between his wife and children in Niger and his uncle's cattle in Ghana. In 1993 Ousmana's wife, Aishatu, and their children came to live with him in Ghana. Ousmana and Aishatu have nine children. None of the children has had a formal education in either the French or the English system. Only two of them have studied the Koran and even then only a little. They all live in a remote, rural location.



Only four years after moving Aishatu, in March 1997, Ousmana took a second wife to the dismay and consternation of his family (Alhaji Tal's wives and children). He had already had a baby daughter with a local young Ga-Dangbe woman, they got married and she moved into Ousmana's compound in the bush. Her name had been changed from her Ga name to a muslim name, Hawa. She is about seventeen years old. Ousmana's first wife Aishatu only speaks Fulfulde and Djerma (Zabarama). His new wife, Hawa, does not speak either of these languages! Ousmana told me that his second wife converted to Islam when they married.

One of Ousmana's nieces (his mother's brother's daughter) was so outraged by his behaviour that she vowed that if she had the money and space at her own home in Accra, she would take Aishatu and her children to live with her in order for her to escape the pain and humiliation of having a young Ga-Dangbe girl as a co-wife.

Fulani place much store upon physical beauty and perfection. Of the women whose stories were told, only one had married a non-Fulani, non-muslim man as her first and only husband. As the following case illustrates, it would appear that there is a definite reason why this woman did not find a Fulani husband and why she had to look outside of the traditional 'pool' of husbands.

### *Infirmity and exogamy*

Hadiza was born in New Madina and has lived here all her life. She contracted polio as a child, which has left her with a permanent, and highly discernible, limp. She walks with the aid of crutches. In her mid-twenties she married a local Ga man. She works as a seamstress and has her own kiosk in New Madina. She is divorced and has one child and is currently unmarried and living with her father.

I would suggest it is by no means coincidental that the only woman to marry a local (non-muslim) Ghanaian as her first husband was physically infirm.

In discussing the preferred types of Wodaabe marriage, Stenning (1959: 42-46) noted that the tenth most preferred type of marriage is intra-clan. Intra clan<sup>120</sup> marriages have been cross-tabulated for the first marriages of both the

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<sup>120</sup> It was not always easy ascertaining whether a name was actually a clan name

women and the men interviewed. The numbers are decidedly larger on the diagonal axis (intra-clan marriage) for both the men and the women. Therefore there would appear to be a higher statistical, as well as stated, preference, among those interviewed, for intra-clan marriage.

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or not. Some, such as Moor and Zabarama are obviously the names of ethnic groups, however the individuals concerned felt themselves to be Fulani and therefore worthy of inclusion in the categories of intra-clan or intra-ethnic marriages despite their father being of a different ethnic group.

*A beautiful bride*



## **Globalizing kinship: The geography of Fulani marriage**

Marriage is one major reason why people migrate. Some movements recorded in this study spanned several thousand kilometres across international boundaries within the sub-region and even continents. Others involved no more than a move to the neighbouring town. While most marriages involved some kind of movement, the frequency and spatial extent of such marriage movements among the Fulani community in Greater Accra are, probably, unique. Fulani men can and do travel back to their countries of origin in order to marry within the family. Fulani women in Accra are generally less mobile than men, and their opportunities to marry within the family are slightly more restricted as a result.

### **Residence**

As a general rule, marriage is virilocal, the bride moving to join her husband and his parents, his male siblings and their spouses and offspring, her husband's unmarried siblings, as well as her husband's other wives. In urban Accra many conjugal residences are neither virilocal nor uxorilocal but represent independently established residential domestic units. Young migrant men rent single rooms in Accra in multi-ethnic compounds and bring their new brides to join them upon marriage. Wealthy men with property may have several houses or rented rooms in different locations and have a wife in each. Ramatu (see 'Ramatu Diko remarries') is a case in point.

#### ***Ramatu Diko remarries...revisited***

Ramatu's second husband, Alhaji, is a Hausa businessman, he has his own travel agency and organizes and co-ordinates trips to Mecca. Alhaji's first wife lives in Kumasi in one of his houses, and Ramatu lives in Accra in another of Alhaji's properties. Although various female

relatives visit and stay with her from time to time, she basically lives on her own. She has a paid housemaid to help her with the domestic work (cooking, cleaning, going to market etc.) Alhaji divides his time between Kumasi and Accra on business and visits each wife in turn.

There are also exceptional cases of uxorilocal residence as the following case illustrates:

### *Yacouba Diallo*

At the age of twenty, Yacouba left his parental home in Burkina to pursue his koranic studies abroad. For seven years he travelled throughout West Africa in pursuit of knowledge and taught the Koran. He lived variously in Niger, Benin, Nigeria, Congo and Côte d'Ivoire. At the age of twenty-eight he came to Accra, Ghana.

Upon inquiring where he might find other Fulani, he was directed to the household of Alhaji Diallo in New Madina. His plan was to work as a mallam and teach the Koran with a view to earning enough money to return home to Burkina. After a while he had amassed enough money to go home, but he realized that life in New Madina was good and decided to stay.

He asked Alhaji Diallo for the hand of his daughter, Fati, in marriage. Alhaji Diallo agreed. Yacouba and Fati still live with Alhaji Diallo and the rest of their large family in New Madina. Yacouba and Fati have three children, two girls and a boy. The two girls married family members in 1996. The oldest, Mariama (see 'Mariama's musical mix' in Chapter Seven) went to Burkina Faso and the youngest, Halimatou-Sadia to Niger, with the view to joining her husband in Boston, USA (see 'The case of the frustrated bride').

This is one of two examples I encountered in Accra of Fulani men marrying into wealthy, high status families and moving in to join their wives: Fati continued to reside in her parents' compound even after marriage.

Movement and migration have potentially far reaching impacts on marriage. One aspect of this mobility, discussed previously, is that of spouses moving to join, or run away from, each other. Another aspect of mobility, conjoined with polygyny, affords men an opportunity to have several wives living in different places whom they may visit for variable periods. From the women's point of view,

however, this means they and their children are frequently left on their own while their husbands travel.

Ibrahim is a case in point of this phenomenon of transnational polygyny.

### *Ibrahim's scattered spouses*

Ibrahim Aamadu is forty-five years old. He was born in Fadan Gourma in Burkina Faso. He is a mallam of no fixed residence. Ibrahim has been married four times in four different West African states. He first married when he was twenty years old, to Ramata, in Burkina Faso. It was his own decision to marry. Ramata was his father's sister's son's daughter. They are still married. Ibrahim's second wife, Mariama, was also Fulani but they were not related. They married in Benin, where she still resides. Habiba, his third wife, is from Bawku in Northern Ghana. They got divorced after one year. Mariama, his fourth wife is a Fulani from Togo where she lives. They are still married. Ibrahim has one child, a son by his third wife in Bawku.

In some instances, people move because they are 'reluctant' wives or husbands. Sometimes partners lived in different countries because their travel plans have been frustrated by international travel regulations. The following case is of Yacouba Diallo's second daughter, Halimatou Sadia. She married in New Madina in 1996 but has yet to join her husband in Boston, USA, as she has no US visa.

### *The case of the frustrated bride*

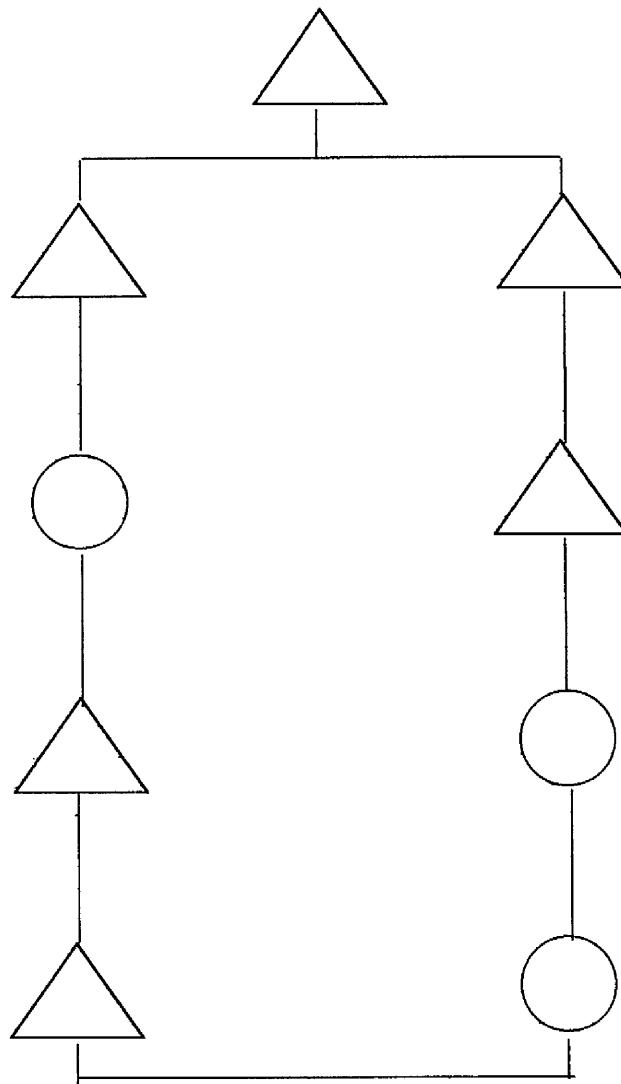
Sadia is a twenty-year-old student, born and brought up in New Madina. She is well educated and has completed her 'A' levels and is furthering her Koranic studies. Her mother's father (Alhaji Diallo in whose compound she was born and raised) migrated to Ghana from Burkina Faso some sixty years ago. In 1994 a young man named Mohammed, aged twenty-five, came to pay Sadia and her extended family a visit. Mohammed and Sadia were related (Sadia's maternal grandfather and Mohammed's paternal grandmother were parallel cousins). On meeting, Sadia and Mohammed struck up a friendship. Upon Mohammed's return to Niger (after his holiday in Ghana) he and Sadia kept in touch. They wrote to each other, and phoned when they had the opportunity, and before long fell in love.

Mohammed and Sadia decided that they wanted to get married. In December 1996 Mohammed's mother came to Ghana to perform the first stage in the marriage preparations. She informed Sadia's parents of her son's wishes to marry their daughter and brought the traditional *ceede hoore* (Fulfulde, literally meaning 'head money'). This money was then shared out by Sadia's parents amongst members of the family to signify that Sadia had found a husband and her wedding preparations were being carried out. The rest of the wedding details were discussed, including how much money Sadia was to be given by her husband's family (often cloth and cosmetics and shoes are brought for the bride) and, most importantly, the date for the wedding was set for 19 December 1996.

Meanwhile, in 1995 Mohammed had left Niger for Boston in the United States to study and find employment. This was his first trip to America. On 15 December 1996, just four days before her wedding day, Sadia applied for a visa to join her husband in the States. Sadia had hoped to fly to America on 20 December, the day after her wedding. On 23 December (four days after her wedding) Sadia received word that her visa application had been denied.

In July 1997, seven months after her wedding, Sadia travelled to Niamey with her mother's sister in order to join her mother-in-law. In the months since her visa application was denied in Ghana, Sadia's mother-in-law had successfully applied for a Nigerien passport on Sadia's behalf. Sadia, her mother-in-law and her entire family felt that her chances of getting a visa to America from Niger would be increased since her husband himself comes from Niger. At the time of writing, Sadia is still living in Niamey with her mother-in-law, trying to get a visa to America to join her husband.

The relationship between Sadia & Mohammed





This case represents the most distant marriage migration encountered, but is only one of several to be impeded by international travel restrictions.

The extreme naivety of both families in dealing with the American authorities is apparent. Sadia's family has been arranging marriages backwards and forwards across West Africa for generations and seems to have treated this particular marriage in the same way. It is obvious that they did not foresee any impediments to the migration of Sadia to America to join her husband. Presumably, from the point of view of the American embassy (which is bombarded annually by thousands of visa applications to go to America), this must have been a relatively easy case to dismiss. Sadia's husband is not an American citizen, and the fact that the bride and groom were not together when they married may have appeared suspicious.

## **Webs of kinship: Separation & solidarity**

Having considered the nature and geographical spread of Fulani marriage in West Africa and elsewhere, attention will now focus on the ways in which marriages form and strengthen alliances between Fulani families in Accra, as well as the ways in which they separate and estrange individuals (cf. Riesman 1974: 36). (See Chapter Three.) In discussing these competing (push and pull) forces across the life course of an individual, Riesman highlights the differences apparent between the perspectives of the young and old:

We often forget that...the world is not the same for the young people, for the adults, and for the old; for though family structures do not change, this does not prevent individuals from quarrelling with each other, leaving or dying.

(Riesman 1974: 37)

The webs of Fulani kinship in West Africa are far flung. The separation of husbands from wives (as well as of parents from children, and siblings from one another) means that many people live far away from sources of customary kin

support and care. However as Burnham (1987: 45) notes, even when affines are geographically separated there are still ways in which they are controlled. Consider the following case ('Bah's abandoned bride'). The new bride in question is living with, and being cared for by, her parents-in-law, while the groom is among co-ethnics in Accra, as well as co-nationals, among whom he resides and works.

### *Bah's abandoned bride*

Mohammed is twenty-two years old. He was born in Makry, in Guinea. His clan name is Bah. He lives in Nima and is a tailor. Mohammed lived with his parents in Guinea until he was eight years old when he was sent to a mallam in Sierra Leone to study the Koran. He stayed there until he was thirteen, when he returned to his parents in Guinea for five years. He has no formal state education but has completed the Koran.

Then, at the age of eighteen, he left home to travel, 'pour connaître l'Afrique'. He went to Côte d'Ivoire for several years, alone. He stayed with friends in Côte d'Ivoire and started learning how to be a tailor. In 1993 he came alone to Accra where he presently resides. Since 1993 he has returned to Guinea three times in order to visit his family for two or three months.

At the age of twenty-two, on one such return trip to Guinea, he married Fatumata Binta Bah, his father's father's father's brother's son's daughter (*bibbe baaba*). Fatumata was sixteen years old. Mohammed said that it was his own decision to marry her, no-one pressured him into marriage. They have no children. Mohammed has however left his new bride behind in Guinea while he earns a living as a tailor in Accra.

Labour migration is a major reason why individuals (especially men) move. In the above illustration, while Mohammed was neither forced to marry his bride nor forced to leave her, he decided to leave his natal home of Guinea, as well as his bride, to return to his employment as a tailor in Accra. This has entailed a self-imposed, lengthy and distant separation from his new bride, Fatumata, who has moved from her natal home in order to live with her in-laws, as the virilocal residence norms prescribe. Fatumata therefore has the responsibilities, duties and obligations of a young, childless, daughter-in-law to

fulfil (with the low status and hard work that this often entails), without the moral and emotional support of her husband. Mohammed did not know when he would next be able to afford the trip back to Guinea to visit his wife and family.

Mohammadu believes that his stay in Accra is only temporary. There are, however, other examples of men having simply abandoned their wives and shirking all their conjugal and parental responsibilities without formally divorcing them and with no intention of returning. Aamadua is a good example:

### *Aamadua Arda*

Aamadua Arda is forty-one years old. He was born in Fadan Gourma in Burkina Faso. His clan name is Barry. He is a Mallam. He grew up with his parents in Burkina until he was seven years old. He spent his childhood studying the Koran and his koranic studies took him to other parts of Burkina Faso and Mali.

In 1984 he decided to come to Ghana and lived in Juapong in the Volta Region for ten months. He didn't know anyone in Ghana before deciding to come, but came because he 'liked the name of Ghana'. He subsequently moved to Asutsuare.

At the age of twenty-eight, whilst still living in Burkina Faso, he married. His father arranged the marriage. His bride's name was 'Madam', she was thirteen years old. 'Madam' was his father's brother's daughter (*bibbe baaba*). Madam and Aamadua had two children. Madam worked at home and sold milk. They divorced after nine years together. He told me that he divorced her because anytime he told her not to do something, she would do it. When he told her not to go somewhere she would go. 'She would shout at me, so I took her back to her mother and father.'

Three months after divorcing Madam, Aamadua married Bandaado. She was fourteen years old. This time, it was his own decision to marry. They are not related. They had one child, a girl, Kumbo. When I asked him if he was still married to her or if he had divorced her before coming to Ghana, he replied, 'We're still married, but she is in Burkina and I am in Ghana! If she wants to come, she'll come!'

In 1996, Aamadu married again in Asutsuare Junction. His third wife is called Aissa, she was about twenty-seven when they married. Aissa was born in Asutsuare. Her parents are both from Burkina. She is a Fulani but she and Aamadu are not related.

Aamadu appears to be quite settled in Ghana and would seem not to have any desire to return to his second wife, Bandaado. But neither did he want to take the time and effort to formally divorce her, as he put it: his wife is in Burkina and he is in Ghana. Both Aamadu and Mohammed Ba, like many first generation migrant men, married in their countries of origin before or after (see Alhaji Diallo) coming to Ghana. What is emerging in Accra however is a general trend for local (Ghana-based) alliances to be forged through marriage, often irrespective of nationality and country of origin.

### **New Madina alliances**

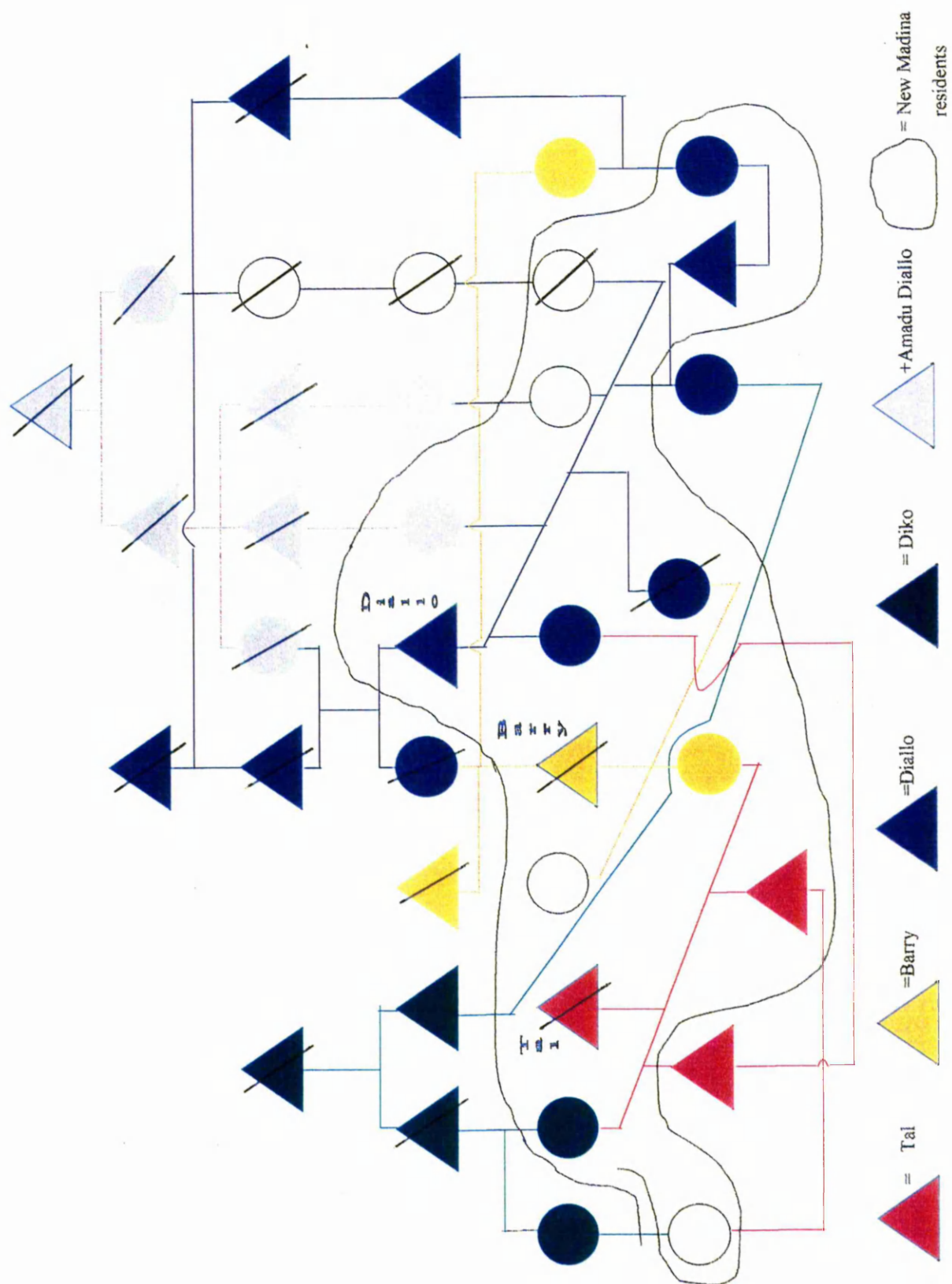
Holy (1996: 135, quoting Needham 1973: 173) observed that marriage alliances need not be between descent groups but that very often they are between 'local residence groups', and marriage rules may be formulated in terms of 'genealogical connection, relationship category, locality, descent group, social class, prior affinal alliance' and so on. The 'local residence groups' living in New Madina are a case in point. New Madina's settlement and growth was founded upon the establishment of links and alliances between these three families.

The three 'founding fathers', Alhaji Diallo and the late Alhaji Barry and Alhaji Tal circulated their daughters among themselves and further strengthened the ties that bound them (see Genealogy). Alhaji Diallo was the first head of the three families to arrive and settle in New Madina. He was later followed by Alhaji Barry, his sister's son. Diallo gave his daughter, Mariama (by his first wife) to Barry to marry. Barry in turn later gave his daughter Assana to Alhaji Tal.

The intermarriages between these families continue today. In the most recent alliance, Amina Diallo, a daughter of Alhaji Diallo, is betrothed to Husein

Tal (a senior son of the late Alhaji Tal) and on the verge of getting married. This union is entirely the decision of the two young individuals involved. Although their families live only several hundred metres apart, the couple are geographically separated by the fact that Amina is still residing in New Madina with her parents, while Husein is currently living and working in Holland. He returns to New Madina periodically to visit his family and his bride to be. As I write, plans are afoot for the marriage to take place in Husein's absence. He is sending the *lefe* (bridewealth gifts) to Ghana from Holland through his junior brother, who also resides in Holland.

## New Madina alliances



Marriage partners have been exchanged between these three families in Accra and their various countries of origin (Burkina Faso, in the case of the Diallos and Barrys, and Niger in the case of the Tals). The objectives of the older generation in forming family alliances are not always overt as the following case study illustrates:

### *Of how a 'visit' became a stay*

In November 1994 Safiatu, then seventeen years of age, left her natal home, Niamey in the Republic of Niger, for Accra to visit her Aunt, Hajia Fatima (her mother, Hadiza's, oldest sister). It was the first time that she had visited Ghana and the first trip she had made outside of Niger. It was more than just a social visit. Safiatu also came to Ghana in order to seek medical attention for a problem that had occurred when she was ten years old. A routine anti-malarial injection had been wrongly administered by a careless school nurse, leading her to have a slight but permanent limp in her left leg.

Safiatu had received word from her Aunt in Accra, through her cousin (Ibrahim) who was at that time schooling in Niamey, that there was a medical ship docked off the coast of Ghana and if she came her limp could be cured.

Safiatu thus came to Ghana to stay with her aunt and visit her cousins, some of whom she had seen on their own visits to Niger. Others she had heard talk of, but never met. Safiatu's aunt Fatima shares her compound with her co-wife Hajia Assana and both their sets of married and unmarried children.

Two months prior to Safiatu's visit to Accra, her mother, Hadiza, and mother's sister had come to Ghana to pay their condolences to their sister Hajia Fatima, whose husband Alhaji Tal had passed away the previous August.

To this day, Safiatu has not seen a doctor about her limp. In fact, since arriving in Accra, the issue of her consulting a doctor has not been raised by her aunt Fatima. A series of events have, however, taken place leading to her permanent settlement in Accra.

The sisters from Niamey had observed that the oldest sons of the late Alhaji Tal were now getting on in years (in fact their ages range from mid-twenties to early thirties) and had not started to get married. It was proposed that Safiatu and her sisters marry their Ghanaian cousins, their maternal aunt's (and aunt's co-wife's) sons.

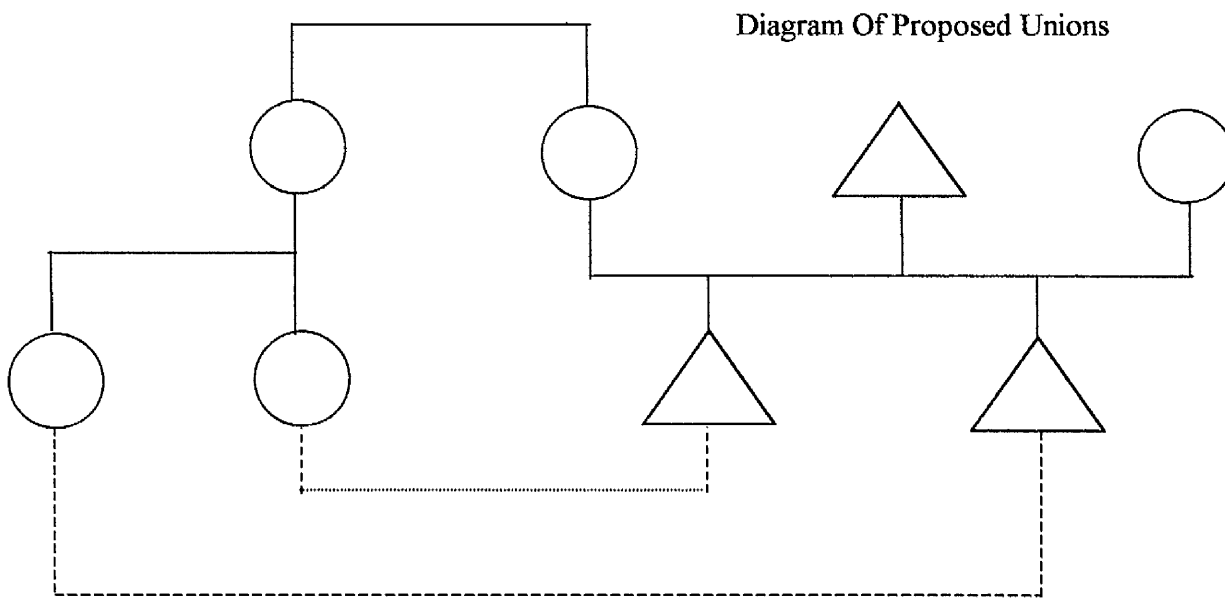
*limp  
in  
her  
left  
leg*

According to Safiatu, Saedu initially refused, but later accepted to marry Safiatu in July 1995, just eight months after her arrival. Prior to their wedding they had spoken to each other on only one occasion. Despite having been in the same compound all this time, they had avoided eye contact.<sup>121</sup> Safiatu told me (in French) that on this one occasion Saedu had come to her room, early one evening and greeted her:

'He said to me, Safiatu "*jam hiiri*"...good-evening, I replied, "good evening", he said that he had come to me that evening to talk to me.... He told me that...he loved me, [and] asked me if I [was] happy about this or not. I pretended as though I hadn't heard... He told me lots of things...but I can't remember it all...'

Thus was Saedu's love for Safiatu revealed. Five months later, on 24 December 1995, Safiatu and Saedu were married. On 30 December 1996 Safiatu gave birth to their first child, a girl, Halimatou-Sadia. Safiatu has yet to pay a return visit to Niger.

Hajia Fatima (Safiatu's mother's sister) had herself been brought from Niger to Accra to marry some forty or so years earlier. She was then only a few years younger than Safiatu was when she first arrived. Perhaps her mother and her mother's sister simply exploited the circumstances of Safiatu's visit to their own ends, that of further aligning two already close families. Safiatu herself rejects any notion that her own mother and her mother's sister schemed with her aunts (mother's sisters) in order to arrange this marriage.



<sup>121</sup> Observing strict *pulaaku*.



Taking the perspective of parents and grandparents looking for partners for their daughters, there would appear to be several types of desired marriage alliance. The continuum of preferences would appear to be from family marriage to non-family Fulani marriage to other Muslim groups. The daughters of high status, wealthy, well-established Fulani families are highly valued and sought after. Taking one set of siblings, the daughters of the late Alhaji Tal, as an example, there follows a brief analysis of their different marriage partners. From this it appears that, ultimately, the desire to marry other Fulani outweighs considerations of the potential partner's wealth, occupation, residence (rural, urban, peri-urban) and provenance as the following case illustrates:

### *The Tal siblings*

Hajia Aisha was married at the age of fifteen to a well educated and relatively wealthy, Fulani businessman, (a non-relative). He is now an aspiring politician. She is his only wife, and they live in urban Accra in a spacious house with modern amenities.

Hajia Hadiza (who told us earlier of her divorce, see 'Arranged marriages: Force & free will') was married at the age of fourteen to a friend of her father's; he was over fifty years old at the time and had been married several times. He was a Kourtey (Fulani) from Niger, a businessman and an ex-serviceman. He was very generous towards her family but not towards her. He was 'too strict' towards her so Hadiza ran away, back to her parents' house. She said: 'He was hard headed. Even if you cried, it didn't bother him...He had medicine [sorcery]. If you hit him with a sword it would break. If you shot him, it would miss. Fire couldn't burn him.' They divorced when Hadiza was twenty-five, she remains childless and unmarried.

Mariama was married to a Zabarama businessman when she was about fifteen. Her husband, a friend of her father's, was in his forties when they married. He was a money lender and got into trouble with the local Ghanaian authorities over his money transactions, as a result of which Mariama had to flee to Niger. After several years they divorced and Mariama returned to Accra where she has remarried a Fulani man (a non-relative). They live in Ashaiman with their three children and one of her daughters from her previous marriage.

Oumou married a Nigerien Fulani. He is a relatively poor man and works as a security man (night watchman) for a rubber company. They have three children and are currently squatting in an unfurnished and abandoned house in the bush which has no running water or electricity and poor sanitation. Her three children have received an erratic education. Compared to her sisters, she is relatively poor and geographically isolated.

Amina was married at the age of seventeen (on the same day as Oumou) to the son of her mother's co-wife's relative. He abandoned her during her second pregnancy with twins. He has never been heard of since. He was a herder; they lived in a rural settlement with no running water or amenities. She remarried a Bambara man, who has subsequently left for New York, USA, to work. He regularly sends back remittances for the upkeep of their twins (Amina's second set). She lives in Nima (urban Accra-zongo) in her husband's family house. Her twin daughters from her first marriage reside with her mother in New Madina.

Rukyatu was recently married, at the age of twenty-one, to a wealthy Hausa businessman. She is his second wife. His first wife lives in Kumasi.

Maimouna is about seventeen years old. She is as yet unmarried and attends secondary school in Madina. Her mother worries whether to allow her to continue her education or whether it is time for her to leave school and get married.<sup>122</sup>

The current ages of the daughters of Alhaji Tal range from over forty years (Hajia Aisha) to seventeen (Maimouna). The older sisters were all married in their early to mid teens. The younger girls have married at a later age. All of the first marriages of the daughters of Alhaji Tal were arranged. The daughters who have been married more than once chose their second husbands themselves. Alhaji Tal married several of his daughters (Hadiza, Mariama and Oumou) to his close friends. Some of the men were wealthy businessmen residing in urban Accra, others were not so well off - herders and night watchmen - living in the rural areas. Only one of Alhaji Tal's own daughters was married to a family member, this is Amina. Socially the girls are living in different environments.

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<sup>122</sup> Some of these cases will be revisited in Chapter Five, from the perspectives of socialization, training and education.

Spatially (within Greater Accra at least) the daughters were spread out. However all the daughters were married to men residing in and around Accra. This contrasts sharply with the sons of Alhaji Tal (as seen in the next chapter). They were mostly sent to their father's home town in Niger to be trained and educated.

In recent years girls, especially urban-based girls, have tended to marry at a later age, as Rukyatu's example shows. However, Rukyatu's marriage was the first since the death of her father. Had Alhaji Tal been alive he might have insisted that she marry sooner. Rukyatu has pursued her studies longer than her siblings. The effects of formal state education on marriage will be taken up in the following chapter.

### **Concluding remarks**

Both Stenning and Dupire stressed that, functionally, the preferred types of marriages they encountered, among nomadic cattle-keepers, closely cohered with the pastoral livelihood serving to promote the viability of domestic groups and maintain the continuity of lineages. Although the types of marriage that they both documented are to be found among Fulani in Greater Accra today, there is little doubt that the 'functions' of and motivations for these marriages have changed.

Once people cease to be completely dependent upon 'following cows' then the fit between marriage and livelihood becomes more complex. For example, in rural Greater Accra, among cattle-keeping Fulani, while a marriage alliance may be advantageous in terms of the inheritance of cattle, the same type of marriage, contracted in urban Accra, between people with no cattle, may be related to issues of local prestige and politics and cementing friendships.

In Greater Accra it would appear that there are (broadly speaking) three different contexts in which marriages occur, loosely related to issues of livelihood, place of residence and generation in Ghana.<sup>123</sup> First of all rural dwelling, cattle-keeping, first generation migrants (people who seem to have started out in the mode of livelihood that Stenning and Dupire document but who have drifted out of it) are marrying in the manner (and for largely the same reasons) that these authors suggest. First marriages are often between closely related individuals from the same country of origin and have implications in terms of cattle management and inheritance. (See Alhaji Diallo's story.)

In the next scenario, second and subsequent generations of made-in-Ghana Fulani (as well as second and subsequent marriages for first generation migrants) are aimed at building alliances with other local Fulani (such as the 'New Madina' people). Some of these marriages take no account of parental or grand-parental country(s) of origin. Other such local alliances are between non-related Fulani hailing from the same country or hometown.

In the third situation there is a range of increasingly urban, more or less wealthy, people with a variety of international orientations (most of whom are not cow-centred). Here too alliances are forged (mainly but not exclusively) with other Fulani. From the point of view of the men, marriages to high-status Fulani women (cow-centred or not) are prized. Given the scattered nature of Fulani urban residence, most of these marriages can be considered to be non-local.

Despite the strongly centrifugal nature of many of the forces at work in the lives of individual Fulani (see Chapter Three), and the potential for the loss of a distinctive Fulani ethnic group identity in Accra, the older generation still seem very concerned to forge alliances and promote solidarity and maintain Fulani identity through space and over time. As a result, a Greater Accra Fulani

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<sup>123</sup> This is obviously an over-simplification of the complex situation found in Accra. Nevertheless it serves to highlight the changes and developments that have been occurring among Fulani in Greater Accra, not necessarily in the types of marriages entered into but the contexts in which they have been occurring.

community, criss-crossed by marriage alliances and integrated through the children of these marriages, is coming into being.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Mobile stories, gendered lives: Socialization, training & education**

..there is no such thing as a 'politically neutral' education system. All systems transmit and foster values...

(Bray et al. 1986: 27)

This chapter takes as its site of identity construction, the socialization, training and education experiences, both formal and informal, of the young. Whereas in other chapters the 'construction sites' under consideration are explicit, and focus on particular events with specific locations - such as the street procession encountered in Chapter One - in this instance, the implicit social processes involved in the training of young Fulani are the focus.

There are a variety of strategies available to parents, grandparents and guardians for training the next generation. Broadly speaking, these options can be categorized by their content and context, their structure, as well as the actors who participate in them and the experiences they impart, as well as ultimately the livelihoods and lifestyles for which they equip the young.

Rather than treating the different strategies (secular state education, Koranic education, training in 'traditional' occupations etc.) as if they were discrete and mutually exclusive (which is clearly not the case) this chapter shows the ways in which these multiple and overlapping strategies are used, consecutively and simultaneously, in raising Fulani offspring.

In many instances, the rhetoric regarding the merits and demerits of different strategies is often polarized and over-simplified (for example state education is 'bad', Koranic education is 'good'). Ramatu Diko, who features later in this chapter, said, 'There are Fulani who have never been to school and if they have *pulaaku* they are not illiterate...' Ramatu Diko implies that *pulaaku*, the moral and ethical code of the Fulani, is instructive and educative in its own way. It teaches skills equal to those learnt in formal state school, though not the same. Considerations of *pulaaku* are therefore relevant to the present discussion.

The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, the different strategies available are examined, as are the divergences in opportunities and experience across the life cycle, between the sexes. The mobile nature of these experiences (geographically and between different types of training) informs us of the various spatial contexts, both public and private, females and males inhabit and the opportunities available, if any, for moving into other spaces. Experiences differ between individuals residing in the same and different locations, between the sexes and even between same-sex members of a single sibling group. In the second section, these differences are examined through the use of detailed case studies.

The third section of this chapter considers *pulaaku*. *Pulaaku* repeatedly came up in conversations concerning socialization, training and education. And opinions clearly differ as to the relationship between *pulaaku* and these other strategies of education. For some there are tensions between the moral and behavioural dictates of *pulaaku* and those of state schools, for others there is no incongruity.

In the fourth and final section, the biography of one remarkable man, Hamidu Dem is presented. We examine his repeated attempts to educate Fulani in Greater Accra in Fulfulde and the Koran, and more specifically his successive failures. The latter illustrate some of the peculiar features of the Fulani experience in Greater Accra, for example the dispersed nature of Fulani settlements.

## Gendered differentials in experiences & opportunities: the life cycle approach

Socialization implicates those interactive processes – their structures, contents, contexts, and actors – in and through which one learns to be an actor, to engage in interaction, to occupy statuses, to enact roles, and to forge social relationships in community life, as well as acquiring the competence, skills, sensitivities, and dispositions appropriate to such social participation.

(Poole 1994: 832)

Esther Goody (1978: 227) noted two important, striking, and yet apparently contradictory features of West African parenthood. On the one hand, ‘..the tremendous stress placed on parent-child relations’ and, on the other hand, the widespread delegation of parental roles, through a variety of means such as: pawning, crisis and voluntary fostering, ‘housemaids’, educational fosterage, wardship and apprenticeship.

What Goody terms ‘pro-parental’ institutions she sees as, ‘usually [involving] a child of anywhere from six to ten to twelve years of age going to live with the pro-parent until adulthood’ (Goody 1978: 228). This is the context in which many Fulani in Greater Accra have been socialized, trained and educated. However it is not in any way implied that there is a specifically Fulani way of socialization, training and education, common to all Fulani peoples across West Africa. For there are variations in the patterns of parental role delegation found among and between the individuals interviewed in Accra.

In discussing socialization, training and education, it is perhaps useful to distinguish between various ‘stages’ according to life-cycle requirements. These can be considered as falling into the following categories, ‘bearing and begetting, nurturance, training, sponsorship into adulthood, and endowment with civil/kinship status’ (E. Goody 1978: 232). These stages however would all appear to have the



ultimate aim of approaching and solving the 'problems involved in bearing and rearing children, and establishing them in their turn as adults.'

Childhood experiences and environments undoubtedly shape certain 'dimensions of the course of development' (Poole 1994: 837). However these experiences are not fixed in time and space, and socialization, education and training take place over a person's lifetime and these experiences are constantly shaping that person's 'development'.

Individuals are socialized, educated and trained by different strategies for different vocations, (for example cattle-herding, koranic teaching, formal state schooling leading to white collar employment, etc.). Some individuals primarily work within one of these domains, others are afforded the opportunity to move between several simultaneously or consecutively. Adults often make decisions and choices at an early stage in their children's lives: as to the strategies they want them to take and, conversely, the strategies they want them to avoid.

Within one family, the timing of 'structurally patterned events...creates variations in childhood experience...' (Levine 1969: 525). These variations in opportunities and constraints are experienced differently not only by females and males but also by older and younger members of the same family, across the life cycle. Epstein (1983: 151) provides a four-phase model for looking at women's changing status, position, and roles in society at different phases of the life cycle. She theorizes that women go from being trained by older women to, 'accept social and cultural norms of behaviour', to being married, at which time they must adapt to the role of young wife. In the third phase, as their children grow and begin to leave home and as the 'constraints on their behaviour lessen', they in turn as mothers and aunts, start to influence the training of subsequent generations. In the fourth and final phase, these women, who by now have grown-up children and grandchildren of their own, 'perpetuate cultural traditions and norms'.

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In order to grasp the divergent nature of the opportunities afforded men and women, and to appreciate the temporal as well as spatial nature of these differences in educational opportunities, detailed biographical information was obtained for the over two hundred individuals, whose life stories were collected. Detailed temporal<sup>124</sup> information was systematically gathered on their spatial (where), contextual (who with) and experiential (what doing) encounters with education throughout their lives, paying particular attention to experiences in childhood and youth.

In her comparison of demographic features of female and male life-cycle experiences in West Africa, Ware noted that it is better 'to base generalizations about the differences between the lives of men and women upon their different life-cycle experiences...' (Ware 1983: 6). Therefore, given the differences in national and 'cultural' experiences among the individuals who define themselves as Fulani in Greater Accra, it was deemed more appropriate to compare experiences across the life-cycle than by falsely attempting to find other 'core' criteria 'common' to all those interviewed, by virtue of their self-identification as Fulani.

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<sup>124</sup> The age groups were divided up as follows:  
0-4; 5-9; 10-14; 15-19; 20-24; 25-49; 50-69; 70+

Table 5.1 Male residence over the life-cycle

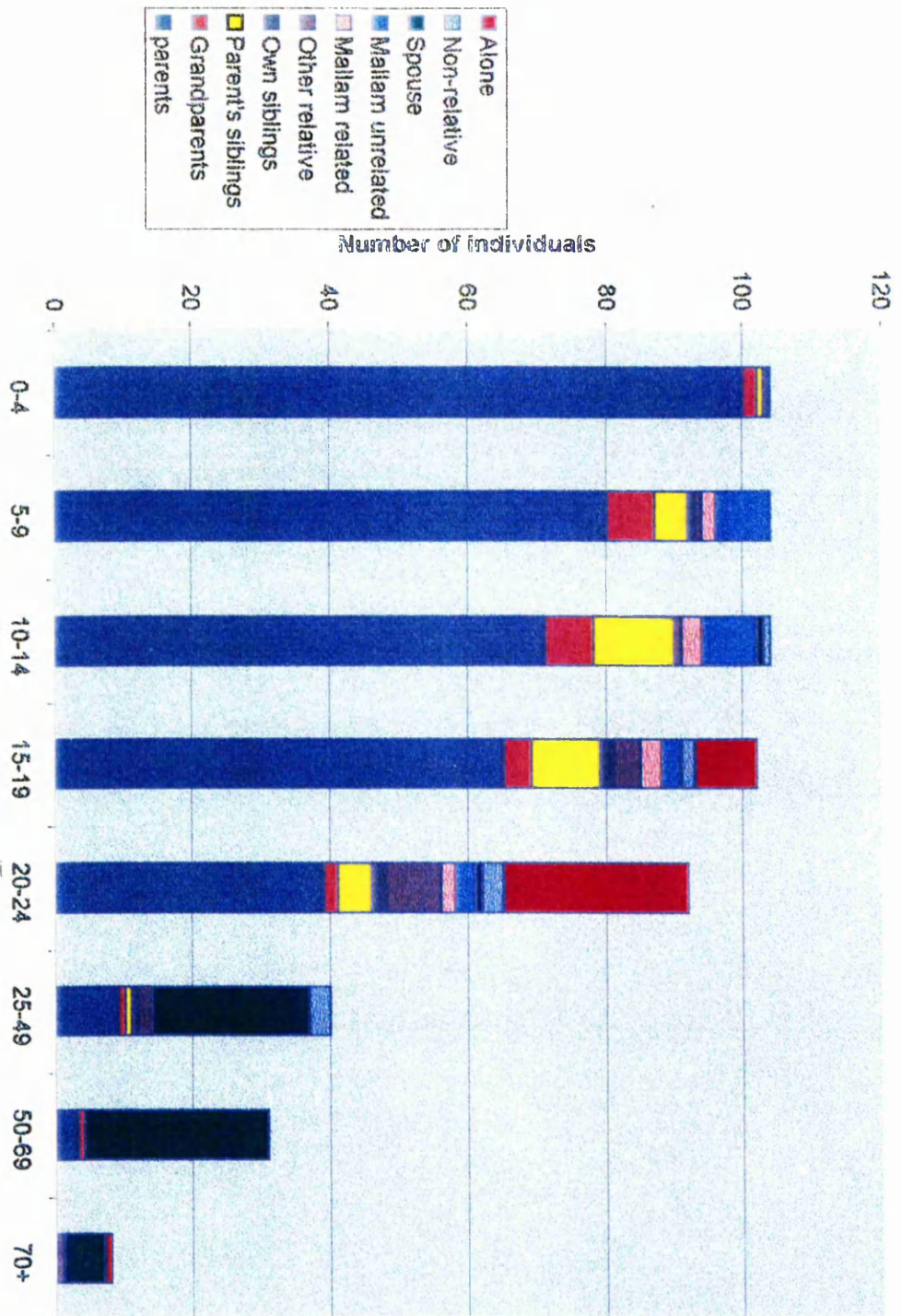
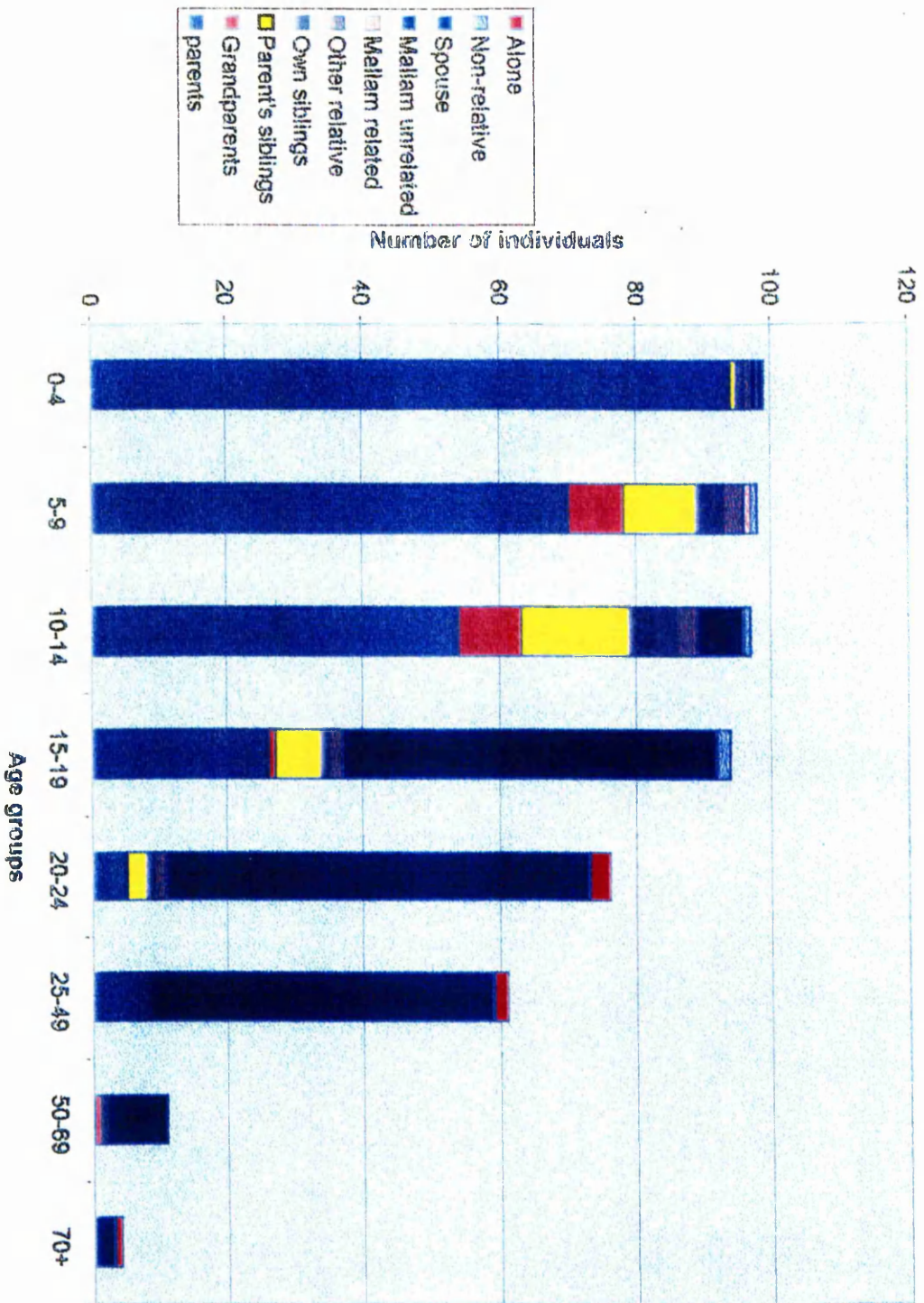


Table 5.2 Female residence over the life-cycle



### Residence: Context & actors

[Socialization] is bound up with the social apparatuses, institutional arrangements, or socio-ecological contexts, and with significant categories of persons, that together define and exemplify the ranges of socially appropriate behaviours for people having social identities and occupying particular statuses in the varied situations of community life.

(Poole 1994: 832)

In order to understand what types of experiences were important among the peoples interviewed, the contexts in which they grew up will be considered. (See Table 5:1 and see below, Male and female residence over the life-cycle.) To account for differences across the life-course, and to make any comparative analyses more meaningful, the people were divided into age categories. Creating these age categories necessarily involves conflating life-experiences of people at say 20-24 years of age at quite different periods of history – say 1940 and 1980. I am not implying that the experiences of these differently aged individuals are directly comparable. Rather, this life-cycle approach is an attempt to understand common patterns of experience (if any) found across time.

In the 0-4 year old category, most individuals, both boys and girls, were living with either one or both of their parents. Two of the boys were with one set of grandparents and one was with his elder sibling.<sup>125</sup> The girls (representing four individuals) were residing with a greater number of different carers. These other carers were:- parents' siblings, own siblings, other relatives and an unrelated mallam.

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<sup>125</sup> Given the relatively small numbers of individuals included in the sample and the nature of the information gathered, it was not deemed necessary to distinguish between maternal and paternal grandparents and male and female siblings although this information was gathered from the individuals concerned. In general it would appear that both maternal and paternal kin share in the responsibilities of rearing the young.

In the 5-9 year old age category, the differences in residential experiences between the sexes diverge considerably. Twenty-four of the boys were living away from their parental home (as compared with four in the below-five category). Seven boys lived with their grandparents, five with their parents' siblings, one with their own sibling, one with another (unspecified) relative and eight with mallams, (two of the boys were related to the mallams). Twenty-five of the girls were residing outside their parental homes, eleven with parents' siblings, eight with grandparents, four with their own siblings, three with another, unspecified relative; one with a mallam (relative) and another girl with a non-relative. One girl lived with her husband. Her case is below.

### *The betrothed child*

Hadiza Mohammadu is thirty-five years old. She was born in Burkina Faso, but currently lives in Madina, Greater Accra. When Hadiza was five years old she was betrothed to her mother's mother's sister's daughter's son. Soon afterwards her mother died. When she was nine, and her husband Ousmanu was fourteen years old, they were married. Hadiza was unaware that Ousmanu was her husband to be. They had grown up together and had even 'slept in the same room' as infants.

Although an equal number of girls and boys, in the 5-9 year old category, moved away from living with their parents (twenty-four), their places of residence were markedly different. For the boys, the single most significant person with whom they resided was a mallam (eight boys). The boys were also with grandparents (seven) and parents' siblings (five). For the girls, the homes of grandparents and parents' siblings are the most typical residential contexts in which they live between the ages of 5-9.

By the 10-14 year age group, thirty-three boys lived away from their parents. Of the girls, forty-five, representing nearly half of all the girls, lived outside their natal home. The boys in this age category resided primarily in the same environments (as they were in the previous age group), namely, with grandparents, parents' siblings and mallams. The girls in this age category started



to get married, seven girls lived with their spouses. The majority of those who resided away from their parents, however, lived with their parents' siblings (sixteen girls) with their grandparents (nine girls) and with their own siblings (seven girls).

In the 15-19 year old age group two-thirds of girls (fifty-five) married and went to live with their spouses. Only twenty-six of them still resided with their parents. The residential profile for the boys in the 15-19 age group however is not greatly different from that of the 10-14 group.

In the 20-24 year old age category the numbers of men and women who resided with their parents was thirty-nine and five respectively. For the men, this was still the largest single category of residence. For the girls, the single most important residential location, during this period, was with their husbands (sixty-two girls). For the men, residence with spouse does not become significant until the 25-49<sup>126</sup> age group onwards. The second most common category of residence for the men in this age group was 'alone'. Twenty-seven men lived alone.

The numbers of men living 'alone' increased dramatically in the next age group, namely the 25-49 year old group. Forty-three men lived by themselves during much of this time. The other significant residential category for the men is residence with a spouse, representing twenty-three men.

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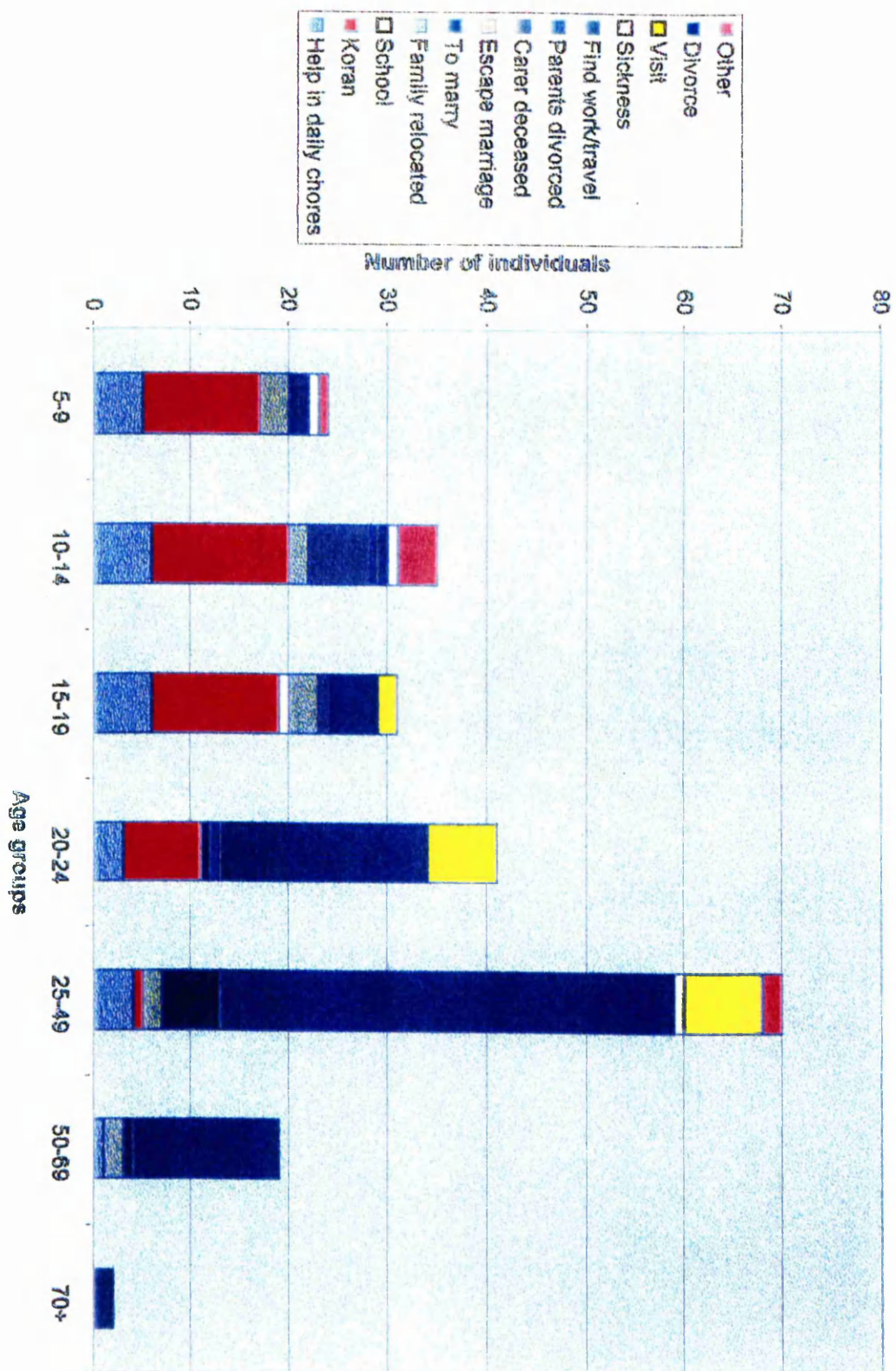
<sup>126</sup> The 25-49 year category was conflated firstly because this chapter is primarily concerned with experiences in childhood and youth and also because the numbers of men and women in the sample was not large enough to justify splitting them up. The second reason has to do with the fact that there tended to be no large discernible differences within this age category.

### **Reasons for relocating**

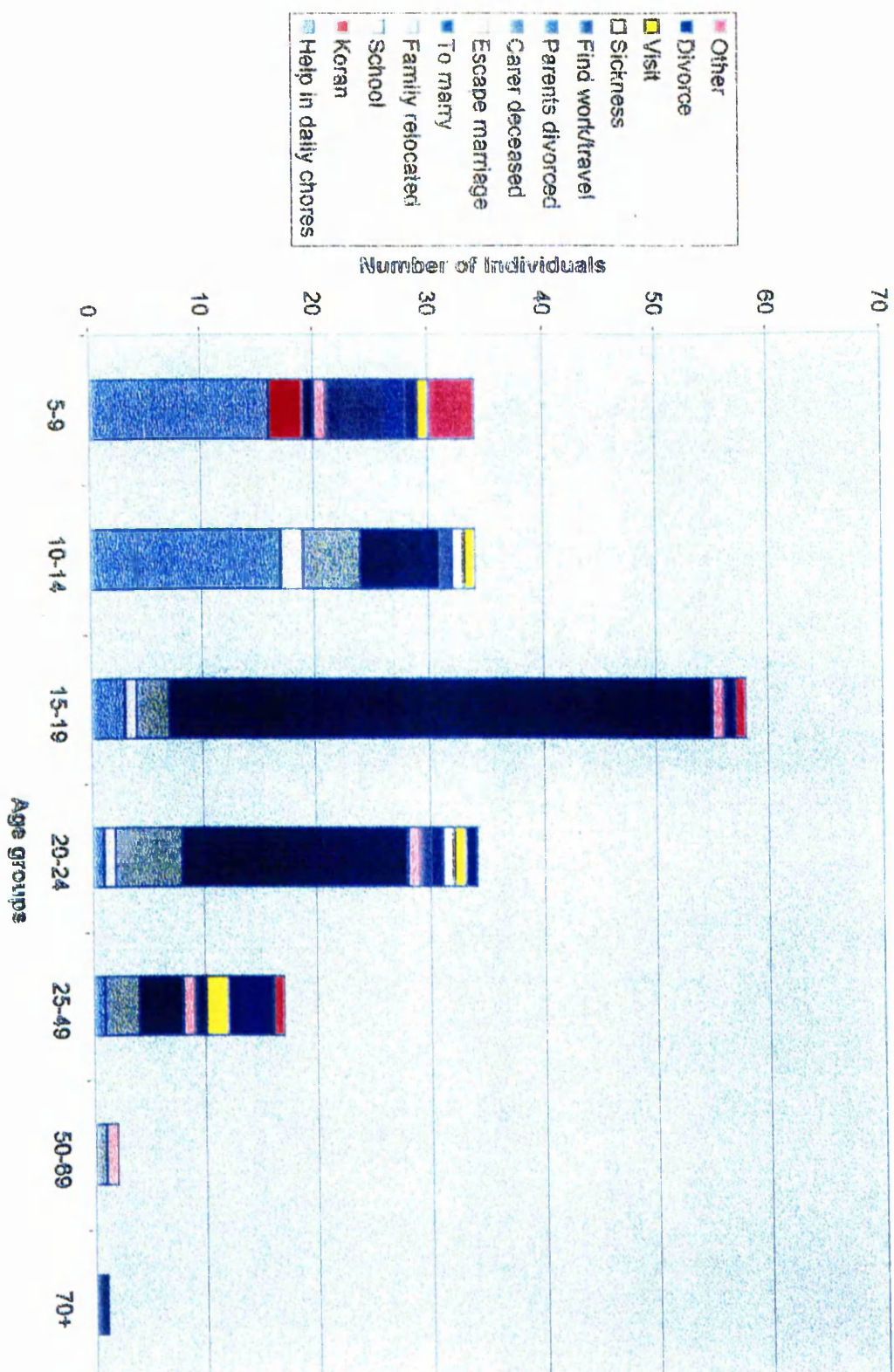
The reasons that people gave for their movements and relocations, at various times in their lives, have been summarized in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 (see tables at the end of this chapter) The two bar graphs below (Female and male life-cycles: Principal reasons for relocating) illustrate the findings. Although the various reasons that individuals gave for their movements have been categorized, it is not implied that one reason (and one reason alone) was responsible for these movements. In some instances a number of different incidents and occurrences simultaneously led the individual to move. However the very fact that these reasons were reducible to twelve main categories also points to the fact that they are fairly standard and typical. In order to grasp the basic differences between the experiences of the females and the males, the information is separately tabulated across the life cycle.



**Table 5.3 Male life cycle: Principal reasons for relocating**



**Table 5.4 Female life cycle: Principal reasons for relocating**



In the 5-9 year old group, thirty-four out of the ninety-nine girls (one-third) moved away from where they had previously been. Sixteen moved in order to help their new caretaker in their daily chores, (cooking, cleaning, fetching and carrying things - water and firewood in many cases). This was the largest single reason for relocation. Other reasons included the death of a previous carer (five girls), studying the Koran (three girls) and parental divorce (two individuals). Young girls were often fostered by relatives (mainly by grandparents and parents' siblings) in order to help out with the daily household work. Some were simultaneously attending koranic school, others secular state school (as we shall see in the next section).

For various reasons, twenty-four boys had relocated between five and nine years of age. However, the largest category of boys (twelve individuals) moved in order to study the Koran (Table 5:2). This is reflected in the numbers who moved to stay with a mallam (See Table 5:1). Five boys moved in order to help their new carer with their daily chores. These daily chores often included learning to herd and take care of cattle, goats, sheep, chickens etc. as well as weeding and farming. Three moved primarily because their families relocated, two left because they wanted to find work and travel and one because he was sick.

In the 10-14 year old group, thirty-four girls (again representing a third of all the girls) relocated. Seventeen moved to help with daily chores (as in the previous age category); seven in order to marry; five because their families had relocated; two girls moved in order to attend school. Thirty-five of the boys in this age group relocated. The largest number moved in order to study the Koran, six others moved to help in daily chores (which often included herding responsibilities). A further six boys moved because their carer died.

The years between fifteen and nineteen years of age represents the time when there is the most upheaval in the lives of women. More than half of the entire number of women interviewed moved during these years in their lives. Forty-eight (nearly half of all the girls) stated that marriage was the main reason

for moving, one woman moved in order to escape from an arranged marriage; three girls moved because their families had relocated. Between the ages of twenty to twenty-four, twenty women moved to marry.

At this same age, (15-19) thirty-eight of the young men moved. Their reasons for relocation were more diverse than were those of the women. Thirteen boys moved in order to study the Koran and a further five moved precisely because they had completed their koranic studies. It is at this age that the young men start to strike out on their own, living 'alone' and travelling in order to find work. The movements of the young men, to find work, were most frequent between 20-24. Twenty-one men moved to find work during this period in their lives. Between the ages of twenty-five to forty-nine the numbers of men moving to find work increases rapidly and represents forty-six individuals. In this same age category, twenty women moved, also to get married.

### **Gendered experiences: Learning environments, content**

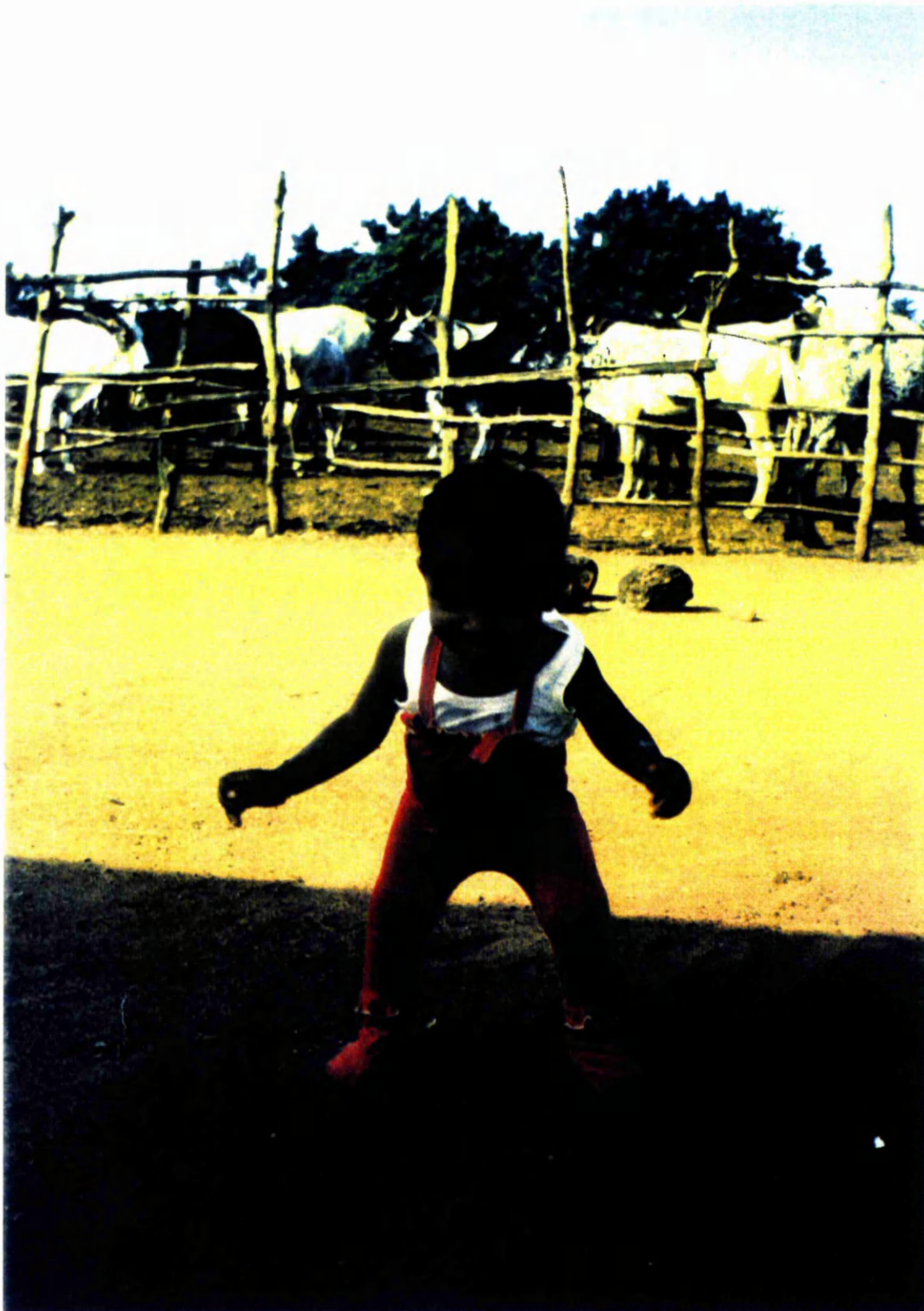
Traditionally, work activities of some form both inside and outside the home have been an integral part of the life experiences of West African women and men from early childhood to later adult years.

(Fapohunda 1983: 32)

Young children (under five/six years old) are dependent upon the care of adults, or older children. An older child, however, has the potential to increasingly contribute to the domestic economy, particularly in situations where the domestic group is not 'divorced from productive activity' (E. Goody 1978: 234). Thus many children, from the age of five onwards, are considered useful. Indeed, a universal feature of the life experiences of the boys and girls is the fact that all of them are engaged in some form of work from an early age. However, the kinds of work in which boys and girls are engaged differ.



*Growing up with cattle*



Apart from the collection of retrospective life histories, during research one compound in New Madina was observed in detail over a period of eighteen months. During their early years (up to roughly the age of five) little girls and boys play together freely in and around the compound and the cattle kraal, learning how to tend the calves. They are sent on errands, for example to fetch water from the well. It is between the ages of five to nine that the contexts and 'categories of persons' with whom the sexes interact and are trained diverge. The urban experience is likely to differ.

The residential profiles and experiences of older boys and girls (from age five onwards) are markedly different. Not only is 'who' they are residing with different, but so also are their reasons given for relocating. These differences mean that the skills acquired and the social worlds inhabited by the boys and the girls are very different. The girls are mainly sent to live with kin. They help out in daily chores and learn domestic skills such as cooking. Movement of the boys however, during their early years, is more likely to be related to studying the Koran, or with movement to a family member to help out in daily chores and learn the skills of cattle herding. Here are two fairly typical examples. The first is the story of Aissatu Saedu, now in her early eighties and residing in Nima, Accra. The second is the story of a young boy, twenty years old, who came to Ghana only months prior to our meeting.

### *Aissatu Saedu*

Aissatu is over eighty years of age and was born in Burkina Faso. She has no formal state or koranic education. As a young girl, (she was less than ten years old), she moved from living with her mother and father to be with her father's mother. Her siblings however stayed with her parents. Her grandmother taught her how to spin cotton and weave mats, and Aissatu helped her out in her daily household chores. She was the only one to move to her grandmother's house (also in Burkina); her brothers stayed with their parents.

Aissatu left her grandmother's house at the age of fourteen when she was married. Less than one month after marriage she ran away from her husband and travelled by herself to Ghana. She eventually remarried and settled down in Accra.

It is not only little girls who are sent to their grandparents to help in daily chores and learn new skills, little boys are also fostered and trained. Djibo had his own story to tell.

### *Djibo Moussa*

Djibo was born in Sira Khatoum, Niger and is twenty years old. He is a herdsman. Up till the age of five Djibo lived with his parents. He helped out at home by giving water to the cattle. At the age of five he was sent to his mother's mother, also in Sira, to help her out with her daily chores. He washed clothes, fetched water, swept the compound etc. A year later his grandmother died.

Djibo returned to live with his mother and father. He learned how to herd by watching his brothers, Saedu and Oumarou. At the age of eleven he started to go to the bush with the cattle. He would go for a week at a time without coming home with the cows. He would survive by drinking the milk and millet flour.

Djibo started primary school at the age of thirteen and left last year, at age nineteen. He studied the Koran for one year at the age of fifteen, however it was too far away from his school and he couldn't attend both koranic and state school at the same time and therefore gave up on his koranic studies. At the age of nineteen, he left Niger to find work. On the 3 December 1996, Djibo came to Odumse, Ghana, he has never returned to Niger. Djibo travelled alone; the journey took him two days. He travelled without documents because he left his Carte d'identité at home, claiming that had he taken it from his parents' house their suspicions would have been aroused that he was going to run away. Months prior to his coming to Ghana, he took his exams at school and failed, his family wanted him to retake them, he refused and so ran away. Djibo speaks Fulfulde, Djerma and French.

The learning environments (their structure, content, contexts and actors) in which Djibo has been 'educated' have been diverse. In basic terms, he has learned in three very different contexts. He has acquired the skills necessary to tend livestock. He has studied the Koran and has also attended formal state

school. Djibo's case illustrates the ways in which different types of socialization, training and education with their very different contents (practical tasks, moral precepts, theoretical concepts), contexts (domestic compound, bush, school room), structures (formal and informal) and actors (kin and non-kin) can simultaneously be a part of an individual's life and 'education'. Having experienced a variety of different 'types' of training, Djibo decided his own life path. He preferred to look after cattle and the independent and mobile lifestyle that this afforded him.

The retrospective nature of the data and the broadly defined age categories hide more subtle, short term, features. One common feature of many of the young girls' early child-bearing experiences (and one not captured in the bar graphs) was their return to their own mothers to bear and nurture their first child. This was noted also by Riesman (1992: 106) among the Fulbe and Rimaaybe of Djibo in Burkina Faso. My sample suggests women do not nowadays always return to their mothers to give birth. However this remains a commonly expressed norm, and where it occurs must be counted part of a young girls training.

Whether or not a young girl does return to her mother in order to deliver and care for her new infant sometimes depends upon the distance between mother and daughter. If a mother and daughter live very far apart then return is not always possible even if desired. In the following example, Mairo, who lives in the southern Volta region with her husband, returned to her mother's house in Greater Accra.

### ***Mariama Hama***

Mariama, or Mairo as she is affectionately called, is about fifteen years old. She has no formal education and has never studied the Koran. She was born in Sira, Niger. She lived in Niger with her mother until she was ten. As a child in Niger she made woven calabash covers (*bedu*). She was taught how to weave them by her older sister, Fati. At the age of ten, her family relocated, Mairo moved with her mother and brothers and sisters to join their father in Ghana. (She had no



travel documents). She lived with both parents until the age of fourteen when she was married. Then she moved to Bator in the Volta Region to join her husband.

Her marriage was arranged for her by her father. Her husband is a Fulani, a Tal from Benin. He is a herdsman. In April 1997 Mairo gave birth to her first child, a girl, Fatima. She delivered her baby at her parents' house, with the help of her mother. About three months prior to the birth of her baby, Mairo returned to her mother and father's compound in Odumse, Greater Accra. Three months after delivering her baby, she rejoined her husband in Bator.

Mairo has always lived in remote rural areas and does so to this day. Her family were considered by others, including their own town-dwelling kin, to be very 'traditional'. (They are cattle-keeping Fulani; they always speak Fulfulde in the home environment; none of her immediate family has ever attended state school; Mairo and her female siblings were married in their early teens, which is less frequent these days. In keeping with their family 'traditions' (and because her mother was a short car ride away) Mairo went back to her mother to deliver her first child.

In urban areas other sources of help may be at hand. Other categories of kin, and non-kin, help to train new mothers in the care of their babies. This is so particularly if the new mother's own mother lives far away. For example, Safiatu (see case, 'Of how a visit became a stay', Chapter Four and 'The betrayed bride', Chapter Seven) who lives with her husband in Greater Accra did not return to her mother's house to deliver her first child. Safiatu's mother lives in Niger, so instead she stayed in her husband's compound (where her mother's sister also lives) for the entire duration of her pregnancy. After delivering her baby girl in an Accra hospital, she was sent to live with her sister-in-law (her husband's sister) in Ashaiman.<sup>127</sup> After the birth of her second child, her younger sister came from Niger in order to live with her and help her out.

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<sup>127</sup> Incidentally her sister-in-law was one of the people opposed to Safiatu's marriage to Saedu and displayed her aversion to the marriage by not wearing the chosen wedding cloth (see Chapter Seven on Performance).

Safiatsu's training and the training of her own daughter are reflected in certain practices that are commonly expressed as being in accordance with *pulaaku*. For example Safiatsu discouraged her daughter, even as a baby, from looking her straight in the eye. Safiatsu's husband, Saedu, never calls his daughter, his first born, by her name when addressing her directly - although he may use her name if referring to her to a third person. In public Saedu never plays with his daughter, or pays her any attention. We shall return to considerations of *pulaaku* later on in the chapter.

Both Aisha and Djibo (as in many of the other stories) spent time with their grandmothers as very young children. There is strong evidence in the literature on West African contexts of education, that grandparents are particularly important in the lives of the young. Epstein observed this when she wrote:

The presence of grandparents, in particular grandmothers, plays an important role in the perpetuation of traditional customs and norms... It is the interplay between alternate generations which tends to determine the pattern of social change.

(Epstein 1982: 166)

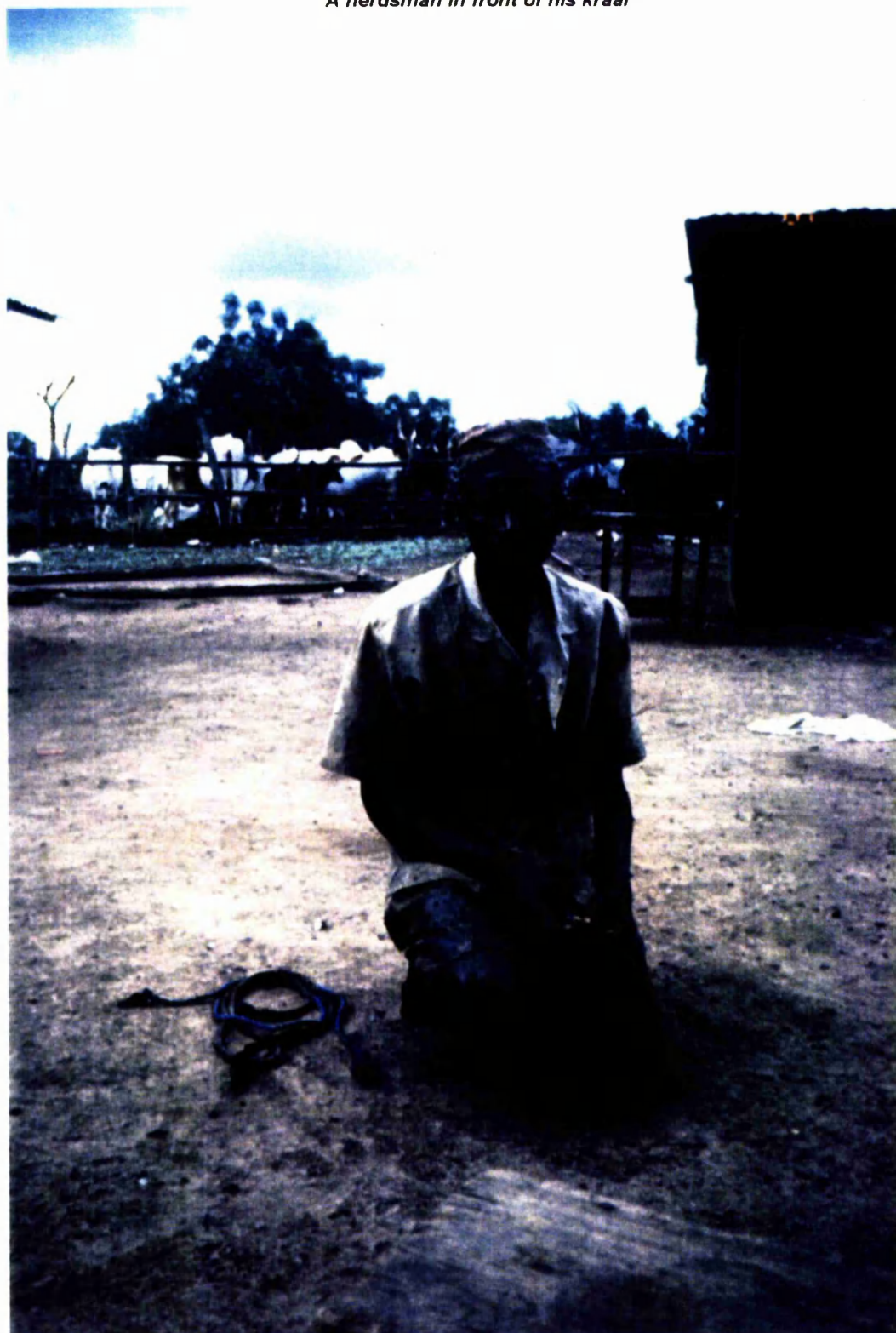
Apart from grandparents, other kin are significant in the lives of young children and foster them in their early years. Parents' siblings, as well as an individual's own older siblings, are often responsible for training and rearing young children and youths. Other categories of kin are also often responsible for training the youth. Layia is a case in point.

### *Layia*

Layia was born in Mardarga, Burkina Faso, and is forty-one years old. Layia grew up in Burkina with his mother and father, where he learnt to farm and herd. At the age of sixteen, he was brought to New Madina by his father's father's brother's son (Alhaji Diallo's younger brother).

Layia came to Ghana in order to help with the family's herds. He continues to live in Ghana and has raised his own family here. The significance of these other categories of kin, in the fostering and training of the young, will become increasingly apparent in the following discussion of koranic education.

*A herdsman in front of his kraal*



It is not only elderly kin who foster young children. The following case is of a young woman Hajia Aisha (we shall return to her story in the section on formal state education) who looks after Koboori (her father's sister's son's daughter). Hajia Aisha herself (now in her mid-thirties) is childless.

### *Koboori's carers*

Ten year old Koboori is the oldest of six daughters. She grew up with her parents in Juapong, Volta Region. At the age of six, she was sent to Hajia Fatima (her father's mother's brother's wife) to take her to a doctor, since she was urinating blood.

When Koboori recovered, her father came to take her home. However, Abdulla (Hajia Fatima's son, and thus her father's mother's brother's son) refused to allow her to leave, saying he [Koboori's father] was not her only father.

Abdulla gave Koboori to his sister, Hajia Hadiza, who is childless and divorced. Should Hadiza remarry, Koboori would accompany her to her new husband who would then be responsible for Koboori's own wedding arrangements when she, in turn, marries.

In a typical day, Koboori gets up at dawn and sweeps inside and outside the rooms of the Tal compound. Before having her own breakfast she washes the plates and pans of the adults. Then she fetches water for Hajia Hadiza's bath, before taking her own bath. Then Koboori returns to the compound to help in food preparation. Koboori runs errands throughout the day - to buy things or to deliver messages for any of the adult members of the compound who may summon her. Koboori has had no formal state education but has studied the Koran a little.

## The virtues & vices of formalized education<sup>128</sup>

### Koranic education

Muslims have a long tradition of travel in search of knowledge. The origin of this practice is linked to the geographical spread of Islam. In order to verify whether a *hadith* was authentic, it was often necessary to travel long distances to question and learn from authorities. Muslims in Africa have been travelling in search of authorities for more than twelve centuries....The practice of travel continues today, little changed.

(Bray et al. 1986: 81)

All the Fulani interviewed in Accra were Muslims. A koranic education is common and is seen as being of the utmost importance in the lives of many Fulani. In contrast to western influenced, state education, in the Islamic system, education is seen as an 'unending process and an individual can remain a student till old age or death' (Bray et al. 1986: 80). Parents will often go to great lengths to ensure a good koranic education for their children. A child can begin to study the Koran from as young as three years of age.

The reputations of mallams travel, and their position and social status in Muslim West African society are generally high, as much for their Islamic learning as for their ability to make charms and divine (Bray et al. 1986: 86). The contexts within which boys and girls learn the Koran often differ, however the content, the Koran, remains the same. Boys are often sent away in order to study with mallams of renown. Movement is a part of the lives of koranic scholars and mallams. Girls on the other hand, are often taught at home or in the house of a neighbour or at a local koranic school. Female spatial worlds, with regards to studying the Koran, are more restricted, than those of males.

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<sup>128</sup> In McIntyre's view, in relation to koranic teaching in Kano, 'The structure of koranic education is not formal or bureaucratic' (1996: 260). I would argue however that it is formal.

### *Maimuna Haamadu*

Maimuna is sixteen years old. She lives at Asutsuare. She is learning to be a seamstress. Her parents were both born in Burkina Faso. Maimuna has no formal education. She has studied the Koran, she was taught by her eldest brother, Hama, at home.

Not only are the spatial contexts different for boys and girls, but so also are the temporal ones. Very often girls will carry on studying the Koran throughout their lives. Only one woman in the sample taught the Koran.

### *Fati, the Koranic teacher*

Fati is forty years old. She is a daughter of Alhaji Diallo and his second wife, Hajia Mumor (see Chapter Three). She was born in New Madina and has lived in her father's compound all her life. She teaches the Koran and works at home.

She started attending New Madina School as a little girl. However she fell sick after just a few months and left, never to return. She said that school 'was just like a game to us'. From the age of twelve, she systematically studied the Koran at home. Her husband, a mallam who moved into Fatima's father's compound and later married Fatima, taught her (see Chapter Four for mention of this case of uxrilocal residence). She finished the Koran when she was about eighteen years old. From twenty she started to teach the Koran.

Currently she teaches the children who reside in her compound, formerly however she taught all the children in the area.

The koranic education of boys who do not become mallams often finishes in their teens.

Table 5.5 Koranic education by sex and age group

Age Group	NONE		A LITTLE		COMPLETED		MALLAM	M	F
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
13-19	2	<u>4</u>	6	<u>17</u>	3	<u>1</u>	-	11	<u>22</u>
20-29	5	<u>2</u>	10	<u>19</u>	9	<u>3</u>	-	24	<u>24</u>
30-39	4	<u>7</u>	6	<u>19</u>	4	<u>2</u>	2	16	<u>28</u>
40-49	4	-	5	<u>13</u>	8	<u>1</u>	-	17	<u>14</u>
50-59	4	<u>1</u>	4	<u>3</u>	4	-	-	12	<u>4</u>
60 +	5	<u>2</u>	14	<u>4</u>	4	<u>1</u>	2	25	<u>7</u>

Note the rising koranic education in the 13-29 category.



The Islamic religious tradition in West Africa imparts not only knowledge but, as Brenner notes, '...prescribes certain modes of behaviour and insists on certain conceptual patterns of thinking; in short and especially in Islam, it is meant to encompass all of life' (Brenner 1980: 1). Below, are some typical cases of male experiences with koranic education.

### *Ousman Sow*

Ousman Sow is thirty-four years old. He was born in Burkina Faso. He lived there with his mother and father until he was eight years old. At the age of eight, he was sent to a Mallam for three years to study the Koran. At the age of eleven, he then went to Niger where he studied for another one and a half years. From Niger he went to Mali for another two years to further his studies. At the age of fourteen, he returned to Burkina to live with his mother's brother. He has no state education.

Abubakar (below) also travelled far in his pursuit of Islamic knowledge:

### *Abubakar Mohammed*

Abubakar Mohammed is twenty-four years old. He was born in Sira, Niger. He lives in Accra and is studying Arabic. He lived in Niger with both of his parents until he was eighteen years old. At the age of eighteen he went to a mallam in Nigeria to study the Koran. He was related to the Mallam but could not specify how. He lived in Kano, Sokoto and Yola. He lived there for five years until he was twenty-three years old.

At the age of twenty-three he left Nigeria for Cameroon to continue his studies. He lived in Cameroon for two months and then went back home to Niger for one year. From Niger, he returned to Nigeria at the age of twenty-four. He lived in Nigeria for another year and then returned to Niger for another eight months. In 1996 he came to Ghana to study the Koran. He said that he will return to Niger in two years time when he has completed his current studies. He can read, speak and write Arabic. He has no state education.

When Ousman returned to Burkina after having studied the Koran he went to his mother's brother, rather than his parents, home. This tendency to be fostered by parental siblings is common as the following case illustrates:-

### ***Abubakar Oumar***

Abubakar Oumar (see Oumar's Oscillating Occupations, Chapter Three) is thirty-eight years old. He was born in Bitin Kori, Niger; he is a cattle trader at Ashaiman cattle market. Two months before Abubakar was born, his father died. When he was just six years old his mother also died. His mother's brother, Ousmana, brought him up in Niger. He attended koranic school and herded. At the age of eight, Ousmana and family relocated to Benin. In Benin, he continued to herd and study the Koran. At thirteen he moved from one of his mother's brothers, Ousmana, to another, Ali. Abubakar has no state education but finished the Koran under the tutelage of Ali. He stayed with Ali for five years up till the age of eighteen.

Apart from parents' siblings, it is also fairly common for children to be fostered by their grandparents' siblings.

### ***Mahmoudou Sidibe***

Mahmoudou Sidibe is sixty-five years old. He was born in Burkina and currently lives in Kasoa. He farms and looks after cattle. He grew up with his mother and father in Burkina until the age of fifteen, when he went to study the Koran with his father's mother's brother. He lived there for nine years until he was twenty-four years old. Then he left Burkina for Nigeria, alone and with no travel documents, to study the Koran. He has no state education.

The life of a young koranic pupil away from home is hard. Not only is the method of instruction often tedious and repetitive and relies heavily on memorization but 'helping with onerous chores is considered part of a pupil's duties to his teacher' (Fafunwa 1982: 19-20). The lives of mallams are also difficult. Fafunwa describes how in the past (and at the present time), a mallam,

...had to wander from place to place looking for charitable Muslims to patronise him and give him food and shelter. Whenever his efforts

were not sufficient to procure the bare necessities of life, he had to send his pupils from door to door asking for charity. They were considered to be *muhajirun* (emigrants) who had left their homes in search of knowledge...

(Fafunwa 1982: 17)

Aamadu's story illustrates some of the hardships faced and the kind of training that a young child receives while studying the Koran.

### *Aamadu Hama*

Aamadu is thirty-five years old. He was born in Burkina Faso in Gorgaaji, east of Doori. He is a mallam by profession. Aamadu has no state education. Until he was seventeen years of age he lived with his mother and father in Burkina Faso. When I asked him what his profession was at the time, he said that he used to search for firewood to light the fire so that he could study at night.

At seventeen he left Burkina Faso for Mali where he went to stay with a mallam (Moodibo Saliu) in order to study the Koran. After two years he got tired of living there, and so decided to move on. He went to another Mallam, *Moodibo* Djaldjalo with whom he lived studying the Koran for three years until he was twenty-two years old. Aamadu said that it was a very difficult life. At twenty-two, he moved to *Moodibo* Ali's, also in Mali, this time for two years. Here, there was also a problem with water. He said, 'When the dry season came, there was no water and the water was bitter'.

When I asked him why he kept moving on, he replied that it was in order to increase his knowledge. He went everywhere alone. From *Moodibo* Ali's he moved to stay with yet another mallam, *Moodibo* Hama Sampilga. He stayed there for six years until he was thirty years old. By the age of thirty he said that he was tired and so decided to return home to his family in Burkina. When he returned home he made money by selling pans and brushes and soap and cushions.... After one year he left. He said, 'I couldn't stay where I couldn't study, so I left. When someone is used to travelling, they don't like being told what to do'.

I asked him how a child growing up with a mallam feeds itself. He put on a show of begging. He said that for each meal he would have to go out in to the community and beg for food. He said that this was called '*Ahijo*' in Fulfulde.<sup>129</sup>

### State education

There is no single description of a school setting which could possibly account for all the different circumstances under which the individuals interviewed attended state school. The factors which varied from case to case included such obvious ones as: the country in which an individual was educated, the location within that country (urban, peri-urban, rural), the presence or lack of school facilities, as well as more personal family details such as the relative wealth or poverty of the family, the extent to which the family could do without (or were prepared to do without) the full-time help of the child in question, the value placed upon school and so on and so forth.

The experiences of those who had attended school in Ghana for instance varied from attendance at overpopulated, under-resourced state-run schools to privately owned, fee-paying institutions with lower teacher/pupil ratios and superior facilities. Although the various types of school in Ghana teach a standardized syllabus, it is openly acknowledged in Ghana today that educational standards are rapidly slipping (in part due to demographic pressures) and that children in different school systems get very different types of education.

In terms of access, there is undoubtedly a greater choice of schools available for those currently living in the urban centres of Greater Accra. However, none of the rural locations in which fieldwork was conducted was so remote as to be completely inaccessible to schools. The attitudes of the parents/guardians of a child are more instrumental in determining whether a child

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<sup>129</sup> *Ahijo* means scholar, learned one.

residing in rural Greater Accra attends school than the nature of the remote location itself. However, town-dwellers had greater access to schools and more social pressures placed upon them by their neighbours and immediate communities to send their children to school.

There is a general resistance to and suspicion of formal state education by the Fulani in Accra.<sup>130</sup> The general argument against 'western' state education is that it takes children away from learning traditional occupations and skills and exposes them to other undesirable experiences. Although a western-influenced formal state education is the preparation that an individual needs in order to enter into formal sector employment, opportunities in this sector are scarce in Ghana as in the rest of West Africa. Most families cannot afford to count on the 'labour market or the government for economic security or physical safety' (Levine 1986: 177).

State education can also be viewed as taking children away from their traditional networks of kin relations, or at least it stresses relationships and values outside of the realm of the family. Levine noted this when he wrote, '...people feel – and are – unprotected and insecure unless they have these strategic relationships, grounded in networks of kin and neighbours' (Levine 1986: 177).

Formal state schooling not only provides and promotes literacy, numeracy and other skills, it can be viewed as representing a complete model of social organization - a model which places emphasis on qualifications and one's place in the social order and is ultimately enmeshed in a bureaucratic state system. 'The academic occupational-hierarchy carries with it a model of the life span that inspires new social identities and motivates individuals towards new forms of competition, work and family life' (Levine 1986: 192).

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<sup>130</sup> There is a large body of literature on the general aversion of pastoral Fulani towards state education and the challenges involved in attempts at encouraging them to accept state education. The literature includes, Alkali 1989, 1991; Aminu 1991; Ardo 1991; Cobern 1983; Dukku 1991; Ezeomah 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983a,b,c, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991; Ezeomah et al 1982; Gana 1991; Junaïd 1991 a,b,c; Lar 1991; Majasan 1975; Mohammed 1989, 1991; Tahir 1991 a,b,c; Umar 1991 a,b.

Ware (1983: 10) noted the same thing when she wrote, 'In West Africa, Western education teaches new life-styles, opens up economic opportunities, promotes religious change, creates new wants, sets new standards and cannot but bring radical change.' It is precisely these fundamentally life altering changes and new social identities that deter many Fulani from sending their children to school. The 'vices' of a state education are often expressed as being in sharp contrast to the 'virtues' of a koranic education. The former was often associated with a propensity towards alcohol abuse, immoral behaviour, lack of respect for the elders etc. These vices were often equated with the 'dominant' Christian culture of southern Ghana, in sharp contrast to the ideal muslim virtues of not drinking alcohol, chastity of their women, respect for elders etc.

A state education was in many instances seen as leading to the destabilization of Fulani culture and tradition. Not only were many voices adamant that formal education inculcated lax moral values in the young, but other reasons were sometimes put forward to explain the inability of the Fulani to fit into a formal state apparatus. The defence was often given that the Fulani are highly mobile, cattle keeping people and therefore never in one place long enough to educate their children. While some individuals in Greater Accra were engaged in animal rearing, not all Fulani were and many had been settled for generations. The following quotation expresses one person's point of view, shared by many others: -

Fulanis, by nature, they are backward because right from the beginning we only base everything in Islam and the stories of Allah, that is the Koran. Our forefathers they were teaching us not to have anything to do with our colonial masters, not to learn their language and not to learn their culture. One of our grandfathers, El-Haj Oumar Tal, fought the Europeans, preventing them from entering West Africa, and after, most of us tried to copy him, by rejecting western education. So those other tribes, like Mossi, Bambara and so on, did their best to co-operate with the colonial masters and through that co-operation they gained western education.

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Later on, when our colonial masters left us, they [Mossi and Bambara] took over power from them. So Fulanis at the time of independence their level in the system of government was traditional chieftaincy [they] were not significant at all concerning government. That is why we remained so backward, and up to date, we still face the same problems because of lack of education.

(Aliou Diallo Tal. Chairman of *Nassuru* Association of Burkina Be, Nima, Accra)

*A rural-dweller, just back from school – standing in her family's cattle-kraal*





The table below shows the number of males and females (across the different age-categories) who had attended a formal school:-

**Table 5.6 Attendance at formal state school**

<b>FORMAL — EDUCATION</b>	<b>None</b>		<b>Primary</b>		<b>Secondary</b>		<b>Tertiary/ Vocational</b>		<b>TOTAL No. in each age group</b>	
<b>AGE GROUPS</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
13-19	3	<u>10</u>	7	<u>7</u>	1	<u>5</u>	-		<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>
20-29	13	<u>10</u>	6	<u>6</u>	2	<u>5</u>	3	<u>3</u>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
30-39	13	<u>24</u>	2	<u>3</u>	1	-	-	<u>1</u>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>
40-49	15	<u>12</u>	2	<u>2</u>	-	-	-	-	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>
50-59	9	<u>4</u>	3	-	-	-	-	-	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>
60 +	24	<u>7</u>	1	-	-	-	-	-	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>
									<b>105</b>	<b>99</b>

In the above table, note again how the experiences of the thirteen-to-nineteen year olds contrast with those of the older generations. Two factors are likely to have affected this. First many of the teenagers are Ghanaian born and secondly the advent of independence and its effect upon state education in West Africa.

As an introduction to the debates, struggles and issues involved in the general mistrust of the Fulani in Accra to formal state education, the experiences of one large sibling group will be documented. The family in question are the Tal family and the twenty children of the late Alhaji Abubakar Tal, a settled immigrant from Niger. He settled in New Madina where he married and raised a large family and herds (as described in Chapter Three). Tal himself never received a formal education. Of his children, two out of the twenty, Bangari (his eldest son) and Aisha (his eldest daughter), received no formal education whatsoever. The majority, thirteen, received a limited amount of interrupted and irregular study. One of his daughters, Rukyatu, went to secondary school although she didn't finish. One son, Malik, whose case we shall study in detail, completed his secondary education in Niger. Three of his younger children are still attending primary school. The school most of them attended, apart from Malik who went to school in Niger, was a non-fee-paying state school a short walking distance from the family compound.

Although he sent several of his children to the local primary school, Alhaji Tal was not prepared to let their education get in the way of the many jobs that had to be done at home, in the compound. He would often send messengers to the classrooms where his sons were in class to call them home to tend to the animals. His priorities for the children were at home, where they learned by doing and watching. We shall first look at the formal education of Tal's daughters and sons.

### ***Hajia Aisha***

Hajia Aisha is forty years old. She is the oldest daughter of the late Alhaji Tal. She didn't get the chance to go to school, her father wouldn't let her. She told me that at the time she was born, her father said that since she was a girl, she had no need for education. She 'liked' school however and would go to play netball with the schoolgirls.

She was married at the age of thirteen. Her husband is Fulani and well educated. He is a businessman and a politician. All six of her own children attend school (see Samira's success).

Aisha's younger sister, Hajia Hadiza's story (see Koboori's carers) is as follows:

### ***Hajia Hadiza: The case of the harassed school girl***

Hajia Hadiza is thirty-two years old. She was born in Niger. When she was one her mother returned with her to New Madina to join her father and siblings, where she grew up. Hajia Hadiza started school at New Madina Primary School at the age of eight. She left school at the age of thirteen because she was being harassed by one of her male teachers.

Hajia Hadiza readily admits that as a girl she was fair-skinned, buxom and pretty and she was teased as a result. This teacher in particular would tease her and attempt to fondle her breasts. She told me that once she was called into a room on her own and asked to pick a book from high up on a shelf, the male teacher did this, she said, just so that he could brush up against her.

During school hours, she said that she would be sent messages that her father was calling her to come and tend the calves. Even while she was at school, there were suitors coming to her house who wanted to marry her. She said that at this time, about ten men wanted to marry her. Hajia said that one of them used to bring her cloth and other gifts. When her suitors would come to the house, she would run away and hide.

Within six months of Hajia stopping school, she was married. She was fourteen years old. Her husband, in his fifties, was a good friend of her father's.

Aisha, the oldest daughter, did not get the chance to go to school, although she yearned to do so. Hadiza did go, and the harassment she received was evidence of the kinds of reasons that people give to justify not sending their daughters to

school. Ramatu Diko (Aisha and Hadiza's mother's sister) was also harassed as a young girl in an Accra school. She said,

I was slim, nice colour...they [teachers] used to call me 'aunty wig',<sup>131</sup> 'mama thick'. They knew that when I grew up, I'd be beautiful. They used to say they wanted me [to have sex] that was why I ran away. They used to give me gifts... they wanted to touch me. When I left school, they [family] married me soon after.

A contrasting case concerns Rukyatu, Hajia Aisha and Hadiza's youngest full sister. Rukyatu was twenty-one years old at the time of fieldwork, and unmarried.

*Rukyatu: The case of the belligerent school girl*

When we were growing up, the girls married young and the boys liked their cattle work, they would run away [from school] to go and be with the cattle.

(Rukyatu)

Rukyatu is twenty-one years old. She attended the local primary school and a variety of other secondary schools. She left however without completing her 'O' Levels. Instead, she went on to start a four-year secretarial course at a college in Accra. In early 1997, two years short of completion, she dropped out. According to her she stopped attending because her mother could no longer afford the fees. Other members of the family however told a different tale. They said that Rukyatu had dropped out of her own accord, she was not interested in continuing and was just wasting money.<sup>132</sup> Rukyatu eventually told me that her mother had used the school fees as a pretext to get her to stop attending her course but in fact her mother's real reason was that she wanted to marry her off.

When it dawned on Rukyatu that dropping out of school meant that she would have to get married, she started showing an interest in taking up her course again or finding another

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<sup>131</sup> Because of her particularly thick and long hair.

<sup>132</sup> Shortly before she stopped attending altogether, she would spend increasing amounts of time at home, saying that she didn't want to go, for various reasons. For example, she did not want to attend the first few days of term as the pupils were expected to weed the school grounds and undertake other strenuous activities.

secretarial course to attend. It was too late for this since she had already dropped out, no one in her family was sympathetic to her wish to start another course.

'Someone has come who wants to marry me, Ahmed. Everyone has agreed to it. This year, he started to come, before Ramadan, to visit. There is a man, a Fulani called Moussa, he sells cloth and lives in this house. Moussa told Ahmed about me.'

'As soon as Ahmed saw me, he wanted to marry me. If I had known that he was coming, I wouldn't have let him see me! My mother says that he should bring the things [marriage prestations]. He comes [to visit] at weekends and every [public] holiday. When he comes he doesn't meet me because I go to the beach. So on the first of May holiday he came very early in the morning, before breakfast. He was here until four o'clock [in the afternoon] and asked me to go out with him to eat, I said "No!" If we talk nicely, he gives me money.'

Rukyatú was generally considered to be lacking in good moral conduct and was a worry to her mother. She dressed inappropriately, in jeans, shorts and mini skirts. Her sisters and many of the young Fulani girls of her age dressed in African-style cloth, made up in various West African styles. She was very popular and had lots of friends, including a Hausa boyfriend with whom she often went out. It was also generally considered that she was ruining her chances of finding a respectable marriage partner. Her behaviour was largely blamed on her extended education.

Rukyatú found herself in a dilemma. As one of the youngest girls in her sibling group she had had a very different upbringing from her older female siblings, who had been married off early (between the ages of fourteen and seventeen).<sup>133</sup> She had been allowed to pursue her education. She became bored with it and decided to stop, thinking that she would be free to do what she liked. When her family attempted to bring her back to the fold and marry her, according to their will, she rebelled. Rukyatú had been given a taste of alternative ways of living, dressing, socializing, yet she was ultimately expected to conform to the

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<sup>133</sup> As Levine notes, 'The development cycle through which domestic groups pass in many societies... diversifies the experience of children in the "same" family.' (Levine 1969: 525)

norms of her family and marry a respectable man and stay at home raising her family, just as her older siblings had done before her.

Ware wrote,

Educated girls learnt to regard marriage as a matter of individual choice and their insistence upon their individual rights constituted an attack upon the social system as a whole if marriages could no longer be used by elders to regulate all social and political alliances...Education also runs contrary to the idea of marrying off all daughters at puberty before they can be dishonoured.

(Ware 1983: 11)

Although perhaps over simplified, there is a sense in which the above quotation captures the sentiments expressed by many of the older generation in their mistrust of western state education for girls. Maimouna (below) is the youngest of the late Alhaji Tal's daughter's. She is seventeen and still in school. Her mother is worried about her.

### *Maimouna*

Maimouna is seventeen years old and grew up in New Madina with her mother, father and siblings. She studied a little Koran at the Diallo house, but stopped of her own accord. Maimouna started school for the first time at the age of fourteen. She went to New Madina basic school for one year. She started in class five and then had to repeat the year. She hated school and ran away to stay with her sister Oumou, in Ajiringano, a rural location.

Maimouna's mother, Hajia Assana, went to Oumou's to bring Maimouna back to school, Maimouna refused. After three months at her sister's, Maimouna tired of living in the 'bush' and left Oumou's of her own accord. At the age of fifteen, Maimouna returned to New Madina and was persuaded to return to school, where she is now. She plans to complete her primary schooling and wants to continue on to complete secondary school.

Hajia Assana, Maimouna's mother, has a dilemma, for while she initially persuaded Maimouna to complete her primary education, Maimouna is now

enjoying school so much that she wants to go on to secondary school. Hajia is of the opinion that,

I only want Maimouna to go to school for a little [while]...Look at Rukyatu, her mother has wasted all that money on her education. If they go to school too much they get spoilt!...As long as you can read a letter that is fine, you should stop [your education].

The case of the Tal boys will now be examined. Here the virtues and vices of formal state education will be explored from the point of view of the male members of this family.

*The case of the competent cattle herders & their 'educated' sibling*

Alhaji Tal sent four of his sons to Niger. All of them received a Koranic education. Three of them were also sent to live with relatives in order to learn the skills of cattle herding. The brothers who did so have become skilled and competent cattle herders, amassing wealth in their own right in Accra. The fourth brother was allowed to pursue a formal education in Niamey. Due to family circumstances he was unable to finish his schooling and now finds himself back in Accra. He does not have the skills required to herd. He is unwilling to find himself paid employment. He has turned to alcohol and is said to be disgracing his family.

*Iddris*

'Cattle work is the best'

Iddris is in his mid twenties. He was born and raised in New Madina. At the age of six, he went to Calvary School, Madina. While at school, any time that they were short of a herder at home, he would return home to help. He said that after his first year at school, they were short of help at home so he returned home for about six months before returning to school. After another two years at school he again returned home and stayed for one year.

He returned to a different school, Madina Islamic school, where he stayed and studied for four years. He left there at the age of fourteen. He left to take care of the cattle because, he said, sometimes there was no one there to take care of the calves and take the cows to bush. He stayed at home for three years in total and then went to 'Depot School' in Ho, in the Volta Region. There he lived with his mother's father's sister and her husband. He left Ho because he did not like it there.

At the age of seventeen he went to stay in the Volta Region on his own for three months herding cattle. At the age of eighteen, he went to Odumse for four years to stay with Ousmana (his father's sister's son). Up until the age of seventeen he went to school and herded cattle but he told me that 'cattle were more important to me'.

'My father showed me how to look after cattle, but the time I really learned how to look after cattle was in Tamale with Alhaji Rafi [a Nigerian Fulani]. Right now I am at home, sometimes I'll take the house cows to pasture, sometimes I go to Volta Region to help Yussuf, sometimes I go to Tamale to buy cattle to come and sell.'

A contrasting story concerns Malik, Iddris' older paternal half-sibling.

### ***Malik***

Malik is twenty-nine years old. He was born in New Madina. At the age of six he was sent by his father, along with his full elder brother Hassan, to Niamey in Niger to study the Koran as well as to spend time with their family there. Malik lived for two years with his mother's father in Birnin Goure. He was then sent to a town called Tongo Saare to live with a mallam and further his koranic education. The mallam was related to Malik's father although he does not know how. Malik was very unhappy during his stay with the mallam and was maltreated. He was beaten and given too little food. He fell seriously ill while in the care of the mallam, and was taken away by his mother (who had gone to Niger on a visit from New Madina) to stay with her full sister, Hadiza, in Niamey. By now, Malik's younger full brother, Ousmanu, and his half brother, Yussuf, had also been sent to the mallam to study the Koran.

At the age of nine, Malik went to formal state school for the first time. When he started school, he was nearly ten years old but he informed the school authorities that he was seven, in order for him to fit in with the ages of his classmates. At the age of twelve, he moved from the care of one of his mother's sisters to another. Malik studied the Koran and at formal school. At the age of twenty, Malik completed his secondary school education and enrolled himself at the 'Centre



Culturel Americain' in order to improve his English. In July 1994 at the age of twenty-three, Malik got word that his father in Ghana was seriously ill, so he stopped his studies and returned to Ghana. One month later, in August 1994, Alhaji Tal, Malik's father died. Malik never returned to Niger, the reason given was that he could not afford to go back and study as it was too expensive.

Malik finds himself in Accra, having been educated, but unable (or perhaps unwilling) to use the skills that he has acquired. His brothers, who have not been to school, or who have been a little but not completed primary, are skilled in cattle husbandry, veterinary ethno-medicine and some western veterinary techniques. They have valuable skills which they are using to build their wealth and forming some security for the future, allowing them to become adult men, to afford to marry, have children and expand both their families and herds as they go along.

Not only are Malik's skills in animal husbandry lacking, so too are his language skills. His education has been entirely in French and his spoken English is very poor (pidgin), he also professed to having poor Fulfulde. He once compared himself to his brother Yussuf, saying that Yussuf has 'more *pulaaku*' than he does. Malik has taken to drinking heavily (seen as a very shameful thing) and is often on the lookout for money to finance his lifestyle.

Malik is, in a sense, '[socially] dislocated' both from the traditions of cattle herding and from formal sector employment for which he was supposed to be trained (Bray et al. 1986: 30). At the beginning of the chapter, we noted that Bray wrote that '...there is no such thing as a "politically neutral" education system. All systems transmit and foster values...' (Bray et al. 1986: 27). We see from the case studies that the values and priorities in the lives of Yussuf and Malik, for example, are distinct.

Ezeomah, although dealing with a different region (northern Nigeria) and a different group of Fulani (pastoral Fulani) noted that, 'Some Fulani fathers fear that if their children acquire formal western education, they will not herd cattle

and that arduous task will be left to them' (Ezeomah 1978: 8). He stressed this point in most of his writings.<sup>134</sup>

Malik confessed to me that he has in fact only ever taken the cattle into the bush once - one morning, with his half brother Yussuf - and that occurred very recently. On another occasion his brothers were taking their cattle on foot from New Madina in Greater Accra to a place near Juapong on the Volta Region. Malik accompanied them but only completed the first stage of the journey and then turned back home. Physically the journey was very demanding.

Perhaps as a result of his restlessness, Malik has pinned all his hopes and aspirations on going to Europe, to Holland. His older full brother Oumarou went to Holland more than six years ago and was joined over four years ago by another brother Ali. Oumarou led Malik to believe that he could get him and two of his other full brothers to Holland to join him there. On a recent trip to Ghana from Holland, Oumarou started trying to arrange Malik and his two younger brothers' travel documents.

The Ghanaian passports that were created for Malik and his brothers (Mumuni, sixteen, and Ousmana, twenty-seven) were genuine Ghanaian passports, but the information that they gave in order to obtain them was false. Malik, for instance, claimed that he was seventeen years old. In order to qualify as a minor, he had to be under eighteen, Mumuni claimed to be twelve and Ousmana fifteen. In their legal documentation, they also claimed that their brother Oumarou was their father. The story they concocted claimed that their 'father' (Oumarou) had had a relationship with Fatima (who is really the mother of all the young men mentioned) and that Fatima bore three children out of wedlock: Malik, Ousmana and Mumuni. These children were now too much of a burden for their mother to look after. Therefore they were being sent to their father in Holland who was to bear total responsibility for them.

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<sup>134</sup> Ezeomah 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983abc, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991; Ezeomah et al. 1982.

Malik was convinced that their plan would work and kept telling me that he was on his way to Holland. In the event, the Dutch Embassy seized their travel documents and refused to return them, claiming that they were carrying out some further investigations of their own.

### *Ousmanu Tal*

Ousmanu was twenty-seven in 1997. At the age of six, in 1976, he was sent to Niger by his father to live with his father's sister in Sira, Niger. Here he herded the family's cattle for about two years. The cattle belonged to his father's sister and her son.

His father wrote a letter to an Arabic teacher called Alhaji Gatchuri (a relative of Alhaji Tal's, although he could not specify how) asking him to take his sons, including Ousmanu, under his care. Ousmanu stayed with the mallam until he completed the Koran at the age of fifteen. In 1985 he returned to Ghana. On returning to Ghana, Ousmana started primary school. He was sixteen years old. After three years, he stopped.

'I was walking with [spending time with] my Daddy... anywhere he went, he wanted me to go with him. He [father] wanted me to continue [school] but I saw that he was sick and I wanted to be with him...I came home.... Sometimes, if my father would go to town, I would accompany him. If he wanted something, he would send me [to go and get it]. In the evenings, I would go and play football.'

Ousmanu used to play for an under-twenty football team called Aroras. He played in 1988 and again in 1989. In 1989 he was injured and had to stop playing. In 1989 at the age of nineteen, Ousmanu went to New Madina D.C. Primary. He told me that 'My mother advised me to go back.' He stayed for one year and then dropped out again.

'Then I stopped, this was the time that my father was sick...he would send me on [errands]...sometimes, I was in the class and he [Father] would send someone to come and get me...I was disturbing the teacher, so I decided to stop.'

At the moment Ousmanu is not part of a football team, but he is still in training in the hope of being signed up by a local team.

Mumuni is in an equally precarious situation:

***Mumuni Abubakar***

Mumuni is sixteen years old. He is Hajia Fatima's last born child. He lives in New Madina where he has always resided with his brothers and sisters and parents. Between the ages of eight and twelve he attended New Madina School. He then moved to New Hope School in Madina for one year. He claims he then stopped school because his mother had no money to pay for the school fees and wasn't buying him the books that he needed. His sister Rukyatu was in the room whilst I was interviewing Mumuni and she interrupted saying that Mumuni did not like school so he stopped of his own free will.

Between the ages of ten and thirteen, Mumuni studied the Koran at home, where he was taught by Mallam Yacouba, the husband of Fati (Alhaji Diallo's daughter). He stopped attending koranic school. He said that they would close from school at four o'clock, and by that time they would already have closed from Makaranta (Hausa for koranic school). At the weekends when they would have koranic classes he said that he used to be too busy taking the cows to the bush to attend.

He learnt how to look after the cattle by watching and following his full elder brother, Hassan. At first he said that he used to follow Hassan about. If Hassan took the cows out to bush, then he would follow them. Later on, if Hassan went out (of the house) he would leave the cattle to Mumuni. In 1997 he started going to spend time in Odumse, Dodowa, with a hired herd boy called Ojuku, to help out with the family herds there.

The case of the Diallo children and case studies of other urban-elite children provide stark contrasts to the children of the late Alhaji Tal. These cases illustrate the ways in which a different balance has been struck in the Diallo compound between the demands of school and work at home. One of Diallo's sons is a university graduate and also has a keen interest in the family cattle. Another, Ismaila's story is below.

### *Confidence in kraal and class-room*

Ismaila was twenty-four years old in 1997. He was born and brought up in New Madina where he still lives with his mother and father and his father's other wives and children. He is the last born of his mother's twelve children. Ismaila started nursery school at the age of eight where he stayed on to complete his common entrance examinations. At the age of fifteen he moved to St. Mary Seminary School in the Volta Region. Here he did his sixth form. Upon completion of his 'A' levels, he went on to the West African Computer Science Institute in Accra. He completed a one-year course in basic and advanced computer software and then a one-and-a-half year course on programming and system design and analysis. He finished his course in 1996. Currently he is trying to find a computer-related job.

Ismaila told me that his father encouraged all his children, boys and girls, to go to school. At the same time Alhaji Diallo also made sure that they worked with and were interested in the family's cattle. The children were made to know that their school money (for uniforms and books and fees in some instances) was coming from the cattle, so they should work with them to pay their way. If for any reason one of them didn't go to school, Alhaji Diallo showed his displeasure by shunning the company of that child.

While the youngest Diallo children have had the opportunity to attend school, the same school the Tal children attended, there still appear to be some barriers to girls' further education as Nadia's story shows:

### *Nadia*

Nadia wanted to pursue her education. When she completed her 'O' levels, she wanted to do 'A' levels. When she completed her 'A' levels, she wanted to do a course in basic computing skills. She was blocked from taking a computing course, ironically by her brother, a University graduate. Not to be deterred, she spent a few months, while studying for and waiting to retake her 'A' levels, apprenticed to a hairdresser in order to learn another skill. Nadia is still determined that she will go to University, however she is betrothed to Husein Tal, and her wedding would appear to be imminent.

The young urban elite are having the chance to pursue their formal and koranic education simultaneously. Education is prioritized. Here are two typical examples. In both cases the fathers of these children were relatively wealthy businessmen, living under somewhat affluent conditions in urban Accra. The schools they attended were fee-paying schools with quite good resources.

### *Samira's success*

Samira is seventeen years old. She is the daughter of Hajia Aisha (see above) and therefore a granddaughter of the late Alhaji Tal. She has studied the Koran a little. In 1996 at the age of seventeen she completed her 'A' levels. She was so bright at school that she jumped a year. She has also passed her SAT exams. She grew up with her mother and father in Abeka Lapaz, Accra, and is the oldest of five children. She is the only girl. She is currently studying at the University of Science and Technology (UST) in Kumasi. Prior to her admission to UST she harboured an ambition to go to University in America to study Public Relations or International Relations. Her English is impeccable. Her father always speaks to her and her siblings in English.

Interestingly Samira did not know her clan name or even what a clan was (which most other people knew) and she wasn't aware if she had any cattle. These two things, clan identity and cattle were almost universally known by all other Fulani individuals I spoke to, particularly rural and peri-urban dwellers. The next case is similar in that the young boy in question is also from a relatively wealthy, urban-based family.

### *Abubakari Aamadu*

Abubakari is nineteen years old. He was born in Kumasi and lives with his parents and brothers and sisters in Lapaz, urban Accra. He is the oldest of six children. As a young boy, he went to Achimota preparatory and then Apam Secondary, a boarding school. Here, he took his 'A' level. He wants to go to Legon to study engineering. In the mean time, before he starts his National Service,<sup>135</sup> he is helping out his father with the family business. His father has several stores

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<sup>135</sup> In Ghana one year's national service is compulsory for all University

selling cloth in the Makola Market area of central Accra. Abubakar has also finished studying the Koran.

These are the children of relatively wealthy urban elite families. Their education, both formal state and koranic, is prioritized. The children of poorer urban dwellers do not always get a systematic and continuous education. Although there are no school fees to pay at state school, uniforms are obligatory and expensive, as are schoolbooks and stationery. Jodoma (whom we shall meet in the following chapter) has two young sons of primary school age. They have both been to school a little, but dropped out. Therefore, even in urban areas where schools are within easy reach, education is not always a priority or affordable for parents.

Despite the fact that some parents choose to send their sons and daughters to formal school and encourage them to complete their secondary and, in a few cases, tertiary education, there are obvious tensions which emerge. In Nadia's case, as noted above, her own brother, himself a university graduate, blocked her from pursuing her studies. In Samira's case, her visions of studying in America were discouraged by her father. In the following case, although it has apparently been possible for a girl to achieve in both formal and koranic education, her future plans are less certain than those of her male peers.

### *Fatima*

Fatima is the paternal half sister of Abubakari, above, and lives in the same house as him in Abeka, Accra. The daughter of Alhaji Alfari, she is the only child of her parents who divorced after she was born. Fatima is nineteen years old and a student at Accra Girls Secondary School. She is a very confident, articulate young lady.

Her father is a strict disciplinarian and insists that, even in the house, she wears a headscarf to cover her hair. She showed me photographs of herself at school with her friends. The girls in the photos wore miniskirts and their heads were uncovered. Fatima could not bring these friends to

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*students, both before and after they have gained their degrees.*

her house dressed like that, they would not pass her father's scrutiny. Fatima has finished the Koran. She is presently in the lower sixth and hopes to take her 'A' levels next year.

It remains to be seen whether Fatima will be encouraged to go to university and if she does, what kind of profession will she be allowed to pursue. At one point Fatima had thought that she would like to be a journalist, but was discouraged from contemplating a career in this high profile, public profession. It is likely that the fate of the few girls who have had the chance to pursue their education will be similar to Rukyatu. Ultimately they may be discouraged from going further with their education and encouraged to marry, according to family dictates, and stay at home raising their families. However this remains to be seen.

## *Pulaaku*

The concept of *pulaaku* is prevalent both in the ample Fulani literature,<sup>136</sup> as briefly noted in Chapter Two, as well as in the individual discourses of Fulani in Greater Accra today. Fulani individuals often speak of *pulaaku* in absolute and essentialist terms. However, the various accounts given of what *pulaaku* embodies attests to its relative and contextual nature. Most of the people interviewed knew about *pulaaku* and had an opinion about it. The only exceptions were a couple of younger urban children. Some individuals simply said that *pulaaku* is what it means to be Fulani, others were much more specific.

*Pulaaku*, as Burnham (1996: 186) notes, is a 'morally correct and prestigious Fulani style of life; the customs of the Fulani.' All behaviour is affected by it, as Aamadu Arda noted when he said the following:

When you eat, you won't eat everything, you leave some.

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<sup>136</sup> See *Tenets of Pulaaku and its Implications in a Classroom Situation*, Abubakar (1991).



You should not look someone straight in the eye. If you want to tell someone something, you think carefully about how you will phrase it so that it does not hurt the person [s feelings].

If an old person and a young person meet each other on a footpath, the young person should stand aside for the older person [to pass]. If the young are together, [boys or girls] an older person should not step amongst them - he should carry on walking.

You should not call your father-in-law [by his] name; you should call him father of so-and-so. When you marry your wife, you do not call her first name and she won't call your name...If she has been married before you can call her name. It is forbidden in the Koran to call your mother-in-law [by her] name.

If you are invited somewhere - you shouldn't talk loudly and stare. Keep your head down and don't look anyone in the eye.

[An onlooker to our conversation interrupted Aamadua saying:]

*Pulaaku* is different in different regions!

In the case study of the Tal brothers we saw how Malik, the most 'educated' (in a formal state sense) of the young men believed that his brother, Yussuf, an accomplished and confident cattle herder and cattle trader, had 'more *pulaaku*' than himself. Malik equated his brother's knowledge of animal husbandry, his confidence in his profession, his skilled and intimate knowledge of Fulfulde, with having 'more' *pulaaku*. He was implying that there was a graded scale of *pulaaku* and that one could have more or less of it depending on one's training. Fulfulde and cattle would appear to be the two most important reasons, in Malik's view at least, for his brother having more *pulaaku*. In this view, one learns and acquires *pulaaku*, one is not simply born with it.

Other individuals expressed different opinions. They believed that all Fulani intrinsically had *pulaaku*. A contrary opinion, that of Mohammed Sulaiman was that '*Pulaaku woni dimaaku*', *Pulaaku* is freedom. One man, Alhaji Saajo, believed that, 'Anyone who speaks Fulfulde, irrespective of the person's origins, has *pulaaku*.' According to this particular definition, Fulfulde speaking, non-Fulani could also have *pulaaku*, nobility, freedmen and slaves alike. Ramatu Diko, who was harassed and

dropped out of primary school, like many other Fulani, especially the (semi) illiterate, placed great emphasis on *pulaaku*,

If you are a Fulani and you have *pulaaku*, you can go anywhere in the world, it's not that you have to have been to school! There are Fulani who have never been to school and if they have *pulaaku* they are not illiterate...the way that they will eat their food, they will put it into their mouth a little at a time, they will drink all their water slowly. Everything they do, will be done a little at a time.

As in the above statement, *pulaaku* is often brought into discussions of education. There are however often inconsistent and contradictory accounts of the relationship between them, as Sumaila Bah's account shows.

### *Sumaila Bah*

Sumaila is thirty-eight years old. He was born in Fadan Gourma, Burkina Faso. He is a farmer/herder and used to be a singer with a musical group. He lives at Asutsuare Junction, a rural area. He has no formal state education but studied the Koran for four years as a young boy. He studied under his father's sister's son at home. Until he was thirteen years old, he herded cattle.

Sumaila Bah has four children, all of whom were born in Asutsuare. The oldest three go to state school. The youngest is still an infant.

*Fulfulde no tidi sanne* [Fulfulde is very difficult]... *Pulaaku no tidi sanne* [*Pulaaku* is very difficult] What we have inherited is very painful. To have *pulaaku* is to be afraid of shame. When you see a man of your father's age, you can't let the person see you do something shameful. When you see a person of your mother's age, you shouldn't let her see you doing bad things. This is why *pulaaku* is very difficult.

*Pulaaku* is not because you are fair.<sup>137</sup> *Pulaaku* is in your heart. Fulani's didn't learn [go to school] and become something in colonial society, because our elders lived in the bush.

The work of Fulanis is very difficult. There are things you can't do. What is in our heart is our custom. Our custom is the truth. Even if a Fulani becomes a Chief, there are things he can't do, even if you threaten to cut off his head.

I asked him if he thought that it was because of *pulaaku* that people don't send their children to school today. He replied, 'Now we have stopped [not sending children to school]. I have sent three children to school.' I informed him that many of the people that I interviewed, in town and bush, have not sent their children to school, he replied, 'This is [because of] *pulaaku*.'

While sending his own children to school, Sumaila Bah acknowledged that *pulaaku* and formal state schooling may be at odds, and individuals whose lives are ordered by the code of *pulaaku* may be reluctant to let their children attend state school. He however considered himself as having *pulaaku* while, simultaneously, sending his own children to school. Clearly then, not everyone finds it difficult to reconcile *pulaaku* and state education. While some used *pulaaku* to justify their ambivalence towards state education, younger urban, 'made-in-Ghana' children, particularly those born to the urban elite (like Samira, Abubakari and Fatima) did not know what *pulaaku* was,

While it is often the justification for the general unwillingness of Fulani individuals to send their children and wards to state school, *pulaaku* would appear to be, in and of itself, a highly contextual and sometimes personal phenomenon. As Burnham (1996: 54) notes,

...it is plain that the notion of *pulaaku* does not in fact refer to a primordial source of Fulani tradition but reveals instead, in its recognition of the many microscopic variations of Fulani custom, the processes of change and adjustment continually at work in Fulani societies.

## Hamidu's story

In Ghana, the Fulani are not united, this is because the people are not educated, they have not even been to school, even if it is the school to learn Fulfulde. They are not awakened.

(Hamidu Dem)

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<sup>137</sup> Sumailah Bah is a particularly dark skinned individual.

In the following chapter *suudu-baabas* (Fulani ethnic associations) are considered, as are the ways in which several have attempted to educate their members to speak, read and write in Fulfulde. However, as a precursor to these discussions, attention is focussed on the remarkable story of one man, Hamidu Dem of Senegal, a man often spoken of as embodying the virtues of *pulaaku*. His passion to teach his people Fulfulde and the Koran and his insight into the particular problems faced by uneducated (in the formal state sense) Fulani in Ghana have led him, against the odds, to try repeatedly to set up schools to teach and educate the Fulani. This is Hamidu Dem's story.

### *Hamidu Dem*

'My name is Hamidu Mahmoudou Dem, Toroobe of Senegal. I was born in Senegal, in Futa Toro at Anyam Chodai in the department of Matam. My father was a *moodibo*, who taught the Koran. I went to learn the Koran in Mauritania for nine years. After nine years, I returned to my village in Senegal. I stayed there a while and then I travelled a little in Dakar. It was there that I went to Arabic school, until the level of Baccalaureate. I worked hard; I made a great effort to learn Arabic.

I wanted to travel and worked to get my papers [travel documents], so this was how I started to travel. I started in Mali. I stayed there for two years, then my passport got lost. I went to the Ambassador, who said that I should return home. He said he would finance my return home. I didn't want to say no to him, but I took my time and continued on my journey [without my papers].

I was looking for work as a teacher. I went to Mopti, the region of Macina, the region of the Fulbe. It was here that I started to study the Fulani culture...There is a little bit of difference between the language of Macina and Futa. If you are a Futa speaker and you go there, to Macina, the people don't understand you very well [and vice versa].

I started with the language; I bought lots of books. I had studied Fulfulde in Senegal, at the School "Futa Toro" in Dakar in the Association which is called "*Fede bamtaare Pulaar*", I have their [ID] card. After one year in Macina, I continued on my journey to Burkina Faso. At the beginning of my journey I had wanted to travel to Morocco, Egypt, Algeria and to continue my

studies there...my Arabic studies. When my passport got lost, it was this that changed my journey...

I studied the [Fulani] culture and worked. This is what brought me to Burkina Faso. I stayed there for four years in the region of Gourma. It was there that I married, I had my work. I taught...I learned about the lives of the Fulani in Burkina Faso and the differences in the language, because the language... since I am a teacher it is things to do with language...[which interest me]. Also, I was interested in marriage, how the Fulani perform their marriages, and also what they have to pay before they can get married. After four years there, in Burkina Faso, I knew I must leave.

I had planned to come to Ghana, but I had not reached that time when my wife became ill. I heard that there were some good hospitals here. We came here since her parents were here, and she got better. At the same time we realized that she was pregnant. Her parents advised her to stay until she gave birth. After she gave birth, I continued my travels. I returned to the bush, where the Fulani were, to continue my work.

I have seen many things here [in Ghana]. In marriage for example there have been many changes, and there are many Fulani who do not know how to speak Fulfulde. There is also the problem between the herders and the owners of the farms. There is also the problem that the Fulani are not united, everyone is occupied with his own little problems.

At the end of the year 1994, in the month of December, I called my friends, Mahmoudou...and the others. We were seven persons. We said that we must start an association for Fulani people to teach the Fulfulde language and to go out and find *suudu-baaba*, because we had lots of problems...It was because of this that we formed our association: "*Kawrital Pinal e bamtaare suudu-baaba Fulbe*" (see membership card, Chapter Six).

In Ghana, the Fulani are not united, this is because the people are not educated. They have not even been to school, even if it is the school to teach Fulfulde. They are not awakened. There is also the problem with the bush, like here...they are living with neighbours who are not Fulani.

It was because of this that I called my friends [together] and I started to teach Fulfulde here, every Wednesday. The 14 January 1995, we started the first meeting here in Afeynia...There were a lot of people who came...each month the members and anyone who came as a member had to bring 1,000 cedis...

In the beginning we organized the members so that they would be taught each Wednesday and then at the end of every month the members were to pay [their dues]. But later they [the members] weren't serious... This is what pushed me to now teach at Odumse and Kasoa... Right now, financially, I am not in a good state. This is why I am looking for a parcel of land in Odumse, where I can cultivate and then teach as well. When I manage to achieve this then I can then have a timetable, from such and such a day to such and such a day I will teach, from such and such I will go to the fields to do my work... This is my biography.

*Arriving with blackboard*

Hamidu (centre) and Yussuf (left) with Mallam Abubakar (right)



Hamidu aims to set up a school at the *suudu-baaba* in Nima. The next chapter describes what becomes of his dream. His patience is indefatigable and his influence is spreading. As Brenner (1980: 1) notes, 'The ideal Muslim teacher is one who is constantly seeking to help his students incorporate religious precepts into their ordinary lives.' Hamidu Dem seeks to achieve this. So far he has taught Fulfulde and Arabic at Odumse, Ochibleku, Kasoa, Afeynia, Juapong and Asutsuare Junction. All these locations are rural.

No one else was encountered who had taken it upon themselves, so personally and passionately, to educate rural dwelling Fulani in Greater Accra. Hamidu has managed to set up a school in his rural hamlet of Odumse. Here he instructs the local women and children. He has built a makeshift school building and has raised enough money to buy a blackboard for his teaching. None of the women and children in the class he currently teaches would necessarily have had the opportunity to be taught in a formal setting had it not been for Hamidu (see photograph of 'A class-in-progress, Odumse' below). Several of the families whose children are here are mobile.



*A class in progress, Odumse*



While Hamidu's attempts to teach the Fulfulde and the Koran to his neighbours have been successful, his other attempts, to establish a *suudu-baaba*, to educate the men were not so successful. He said,

All that [*suudu-baaba*] has now stopped because of financial problems. The association didn't do as I had wanted it to do, because while we were searching for money and we would put it in the till, the members would go and take it out... They didn't respect what I wanted them to do, to open the minds of the Fulani, this is why it was cut [it ceased]...

At Kasoa till now I am teaching, at Odumse also, I still go around teaching, and explaining what is said in the Koran. When we opened the school, it was functioning for one year and three months. The problem was that they ate the money from the till... this is what brought the problems. If it hadn't been for that, it would still have been functioning...

Now there is only me and Yussuf and a few others, at the moment we are trying to make our own efforts, this is why I am looking for someone who can really help me financially so that I can continue my work...

Hamidu has been unable to rally consistent support for his initiatives and several factors would appear to account for this. First of all the scattered nature of Fulani settlements. Secondly the lack of trust in state schooling, even the lack of interest in the formal teaching of their own language. Thirdly the troubles that can occur when relatively large sums of money are left in the hands of those unaccustomed to such. These issues have led to the less than enthusiastic reception of Hamidu's efforts.

### Concluding remarks

Life-course trajectories are clearly gendered with men and women experiencing different opportunities and accessing contrasting learning environments. The very fact that the spatial (where), contextual (who with), and experiential (what doing) factors, given for the educational experiences of the individuals across the life-

course, were reducible to so few, actor-defined categories, points to the relatively typical and distinctive nature of these experiences.

However, within the range of possible strategies for education (in the broadest sense) there are some basic factors and features that remain constant. For example great value is placed on koranic education. This contrasts with the ambivalence towards state education, and the fact that very few individuals manage to achieve a consistent and uninterrupted school attendance.

In previous chapters there were examples of how people used flight to escape unhappy or unwanted marriages. In this chapter there are cases showing how children who do not want to go to school sometimes simply stop going. Djibo, for example, ran away from his family and country in order to escape school. Maimouna ran away from school for a short while in order to stay with her sister. Bouts of sickness often result in permanent interruption of schooling.

Some use the danger of sexual harassment to justify keeping girls out of school. It does occur but the frequency remains undocumented.

The single most important factor in the successful attainment of a balanced and stable educational strategy would appear not to be the particular strategy itself, but rather the duration, consistency and relevance of it to the individual's career. For example it is not clear what benefits Malik has gained from his formal education.

Clearly not all strategies and options are available to everyone, and residence (rural, urban, peri-urban), parent's/guardian's priorities and resources, the demands of the domestic economy, the mobile nature of the family and so on, all have impacts upon the opportunities available. For the children of wealthy, elite, urban-based families education is a priority, for both girls and boys. These children are given the opportunity to have an uninterrupted state education, usually in reputable, relatively well-resourced fee-paying schools. For other

children, the Tal children are a case in point, birth-order and the demands of the domestic economy would appear to have had quite marked impacts upon the opportunities afforded them. <sup>The historical period in which one is born in</sup> particular is a significant factor, reflecting the fact that changes have occurred and that the children born in Ghana today have perhaps more opportunities for attending formal schools than even their older siblings some few decades ago, as observed in the case of the Tal girls.

Table 5.7 Principal residence by age category

Age Group	0-5		5-9		10-14		15-19		20-24		25-49		50-69		70+	
Who with?	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Parents *	100	94	80	70	71	54	65	26	39	5	9	7	3	1		
Grand-Parents*	2		7	8	7	2	4	1	2		1		1	1		
Parents'	1	1	5	11	12	16	10	7	5	3	1					
Siblings																
Own	1	1	1	4		7	2	1	2	1	1	1		1		
Siblings																
Other																
Relative		1	1	3	1	3	4	2	8	2	2				1	
Mallam			2	1	3		3		2							
Related																
Mallam		1	8		8		3		3							
Unrelated																
Spouse		1			1	7		55	1	62	23	51	27	2	6	3
Non-Relative				1	1	1	2	2	3		3					
Alone							9		27	3	43	2	7		1	1
N/A **						2	2	5	12	23	21	38	66	88	96	95
Total No. of people	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99

\* One or both (sets) / \*\* N/A. Informants who had not yet reached the relevant age category.

Table 5.8 Reasons for relocation

Age Group	5-9		10-14		15-19		20-24		25-49		50-69		70+	
Reason for Relocation	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Help in daily chores	5	16	6	17	6	3	3	1	4	1	1			
Koran	12	3	14		13		8		1					
School				2	1	1		1						
Family relocated	3		2	5	3	3		6	2	3	2	1		
To Marry		1		7		48	1	20	6	4	1	1		
To escape marriage		1				1		1		1		1		
Caretaker		5	6	1	1			1					1	
Deceased														
Parents Divorced		2	1				1							
To find work/travel	2	1	1		5	1	21	1	46	1	15		2	
I was sick	1		1	1				1	1					
Visit		1		1	2		7	1	8	2				
Divorce								1		4				
Other	1	4	4		7*	1	5**		2	1				
N/A	80	65	69	65	66	41	58	65	34	82	85	97	102	98
Total	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99	104	99

- Five of the individuals in the 'other' category relocated because they had completed their Koranic studies. \*\*Political unrest (1)

## CHAPTER 6

### *Suudu-baabas: Fulani ethnic associations*

When the Wangara Chief, Oumarou Issa Baaba was inaugurated as Chief Wangara of this town, the very day that they inaugurated him, we too we sat down in this house and we said, 'No, we the Fulanis, Nima belongs to us, why shall we stay at [the] back [get left behind?]. The name of the Fulani is gone so we have to do something.' Then we sat down and said, 'From today we are going to form a Great Fulani Association called Suudu-Baaba.'

(Mohammed Toure, then Chairman of Great Fulani Association)

There is evidence of concern (among some individuals and groups) of the need to strengthen, or in some instances invent, a sense of community among the geographically dispersed Fulani in Greater Accra. This is nowhere more evident than in the example of *suudu-baaba*. *Suudu-baabas* are Fulani-specific ethnic associations found throughout the Greater Accra region, in the bush and in the city, as well as in the peri-urban fringe.<sup>138</sup> They have existed in the past as well as in the present and new ones are continuously being set up.<sup>139</sup> In general, the public issues expressed by these associations, are bound up in the rhetoric of Fulani unity, pride and self-help. In reality however, the 'private troubles' of the individual associations are those of fragmentation and disunity. These tensions

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<sup>138</sup> Although there are many civil associations in Greater Accra, this chapter only concerns itself with those specific to the Fulani.

<sup>139</sup> Voluntary associations, particularly those based upon common ethnic affiliation, are well documented in other parts of West Africa, see for example: Barnes & Peil 1977; Ben-Zdok & Kooperman 1988; Little 1957, 1965a,b; Lucas 1994; Meillassoux 1968; Middleton 1969; Parkin 1966; Skinner 1974-75; Southall 1975.

highlight the issues and problems of Fulani identity (ethnic and social as well as individual) in Greater Accra today and in the past.

*Suudu* is Fulfulde for hut, house, and compartment. In other words it is a physical structure and represents an area for human habitation in a compound. The literal translation of *baaba* is father; it can also be used to address one's father's brother. *Suudu-baaba* therefore literally means father's house. At a sociological level however *suudu-baaba* can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Burnham (1996: 186) notes that *suudu* refers to the sub-clan as well as the physical structure of the house. Riesman (1974: 284) observes that *suudu* refers to one's lineage. *Suudu-baaba* therefore has a variety of literal and sociological meanings, referring to 'a house submitted to the influence of a father in a general sense.... [and] a socio-political community copied on the model of the family structure' (Hagberg 1998: 134). The reply to the saying '*suudu-baaba*' (often invoked at the beginning of some ethnic association meetings) was '*lenyol go 'to*', meaning 'one lineage'.

Individual Fulani recognize the term *suudu-baaba* throughout Greater Accra. The significance and meaning of the phrase however is likely to vary for different people, depending primarily upon whether the individual speaks Fulfulde or not, but also upon their country of origin. To some people, conversant in Fulfulde, it may signify the clan or the lineage. For those Fulani (mainly 'made-in-Ghana'), who speak little or no Fulfulde, this phrase has become synonymous with Fulani ethnic associations. It is often associated with the meetings of one particular Fulani ethnic association, the Great Fulani Association.

Different individuals often give their own experiences of *suudu-baaba* from their respective countries of origin. Some associate it with Fulani customs and culture, in particular with the traditional musicians called upon to perform at weddings and other ceremonies. For example, one lady, Aissatou Bouraima, (a Nigerien Fulani, who has spent all of her life in rural, cattle-tending environments), associated *suudu-baaba* with the annual meeting of the Fulani in



Sira Khatoum, Niger. This occurs at the beginning of the dry season, when the clan comes together to perform the *sorro*<sup>140</sup> and help with the harvesting of crops.

No one knew the number and composition of all the Fulani associations in Accra. This is not really very surprising as some associations are more vociferous than others. Some associations have official status and others not. Some take place in public venues, others are more low key and occur in private homes. All of them are for a specific section of the Fulani community.

There are some general comments that can be made concerning these Fulani ethnic associations in Greater Accra. The first point is that they are numerous, the various associations all apparently fulfil different roles in the community, serving people with different needs and experiences in Ghana. Some go under other names but all recognize and understand their generic classification as *suudu-baaba*. The second general feature of these organizations is that on the whole they have short life spans and seem prone to collapse. Old ones are dissolving and new ones are being born or splitting off from others on an ongoing basis. The third general feature is that most would claim to be acting on behalf of 'their' people, the Fulani, helping out those in need and providing moral, social and financial support for individual members.<sup>141</sup>

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part describes the different types of *suudu-baabas* present in Accra; the second part looks at their organization and the third assesses the reasons given for the setting up of these associations (contrasting public rhetoric with private troubles).

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<sup>140</sup> *Sorro* is the Fulfulde term for the 'games' which take place among certain Fulani groups in Niger and Northern Nigeria. The *sorro* involves pairs of men beating each other with large sticks as proof of their virility and courage.

<sup>141</sup> Little (1957: 582) wrote of similar associations, which he termed 'Tribal Unions'.

## **‘There are different *suudu-baabas*’**

There are different *suudu-baabas*. Our fathers, the old men, have their own; Niger people have their own; Nigeria, Mali, Burkina, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cameroon, all of them have their own *suudu-baaba*, here in Nima

(Mohammed Toure, then Chairman of Great Fulani Association).

Fulani ethnic associations in Greater Accra are characterized by their abundance and instability. The establishment, disintegration and division of these associations appear not to be a new phenomena. Although many individuals knew of organizations that had existed in the past, no one could state with much certainty the exact number and types of such associations and precisely when they were founded or when they dissolved. Rather than look back to an unknown and fragmented past, the following section looks at some of the associations present in Greater Accra, today.

The various *suudu-baabas* in Accra are organized on the basis of an array of criteria. Some are organized according to country of origin, others are more specifically established on the basis of regional provenance. The criteria for inclusion with (and by extension exclusion from) other associations is age, (or more specifically the division between the youth and the elders). Sex is another major criterion for the establishment of associations. The language(s) that the various meetings are conducted in is crucial in determining who may attend and who are excluded. Some organizations are established for and are organized by Fulani born of slave origin. These bases for identification are not mutually exclusive. Various associations are formed on a number of different criteria, such as country of origin and sex. Where an association is located determines (to a certain extent) its sphere of influence and the composition of its members. (See Table 6.2.)

## Membership cards

41

**THE AIM AND OBJECTS OF THE  
PROPOSAL TO THE WELFARE OF  
THE FULANI COMMUNITY IN  
GHANA**

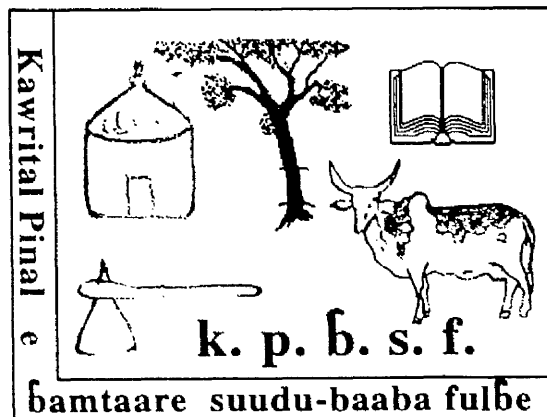
1. We need reliable persons who can not lie to the Community and other people.
  2. We shall also need those whom the fear of God is in them to solve any problem quarrel and misunderstanding that may arise between relatives and friends within the Community.
  3. We shall also nominate some people who will see to strengthen the Community as "UNITY IS STRENGTH".
  4. The following personnel will be required for the upkeep and smooth-running of our books: (1) Secretary (1) Cashier (12) Executive Members and a Trustee.
- POLITICS will be strictly prohibited. From the Community, any unsolved problem shall be referred to the Head of the Community without delay.
6. Those who will be nominated as against the above positions are requested to discharge their duties systematically in order to refrain from any act of disgrace.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



innde \_\_\_\_\_

eno additirte \_\_\_\_\_

golle \_\_\_\_\_

jonnde \_\_\_\_\_

Table 6.1 Some recent Fulani Ethnic associations in Greater Accra

NAME	DATE FOUNDED	WHO IS REPRESENTED	SEX	AGE	LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN MEETINGS	LOCATION Rural/Peri- urban/Urban	DUES per member	WHEN DO THEY MEET?
Great Fulani Association	Nov. 1994	Born In Ghana Fulani	Men & Women	Elders & Youth	Hausa	Urban Nima		Sat 11 a.m.
Great Fulani Association	May 1996	Born In Ghana Fulani	Men & Women	Youth	Hausa	Urban Nima		Sat 4 p.m.
Youth Wing Waldere Fulfulde	May 1996	All Fulani	Men	Youth	Fulfulde	Urban Nima	500 cedis per week	Sun 11 a.m.
Nasuru Association	February 1996	Fulani From The Mossi Plateau In Burkina Faso	Men	Elders & Youth	Fulfulde	Urban Nima	200 cedis per week	Sun 9 a.m.
Boyana	?	Malian Fulani	Men	Elders	Fulfulde	Urban Nima	2,000 cedis per month	1 <sup>st</sup> Sat of every month
Suudu-Baaba	1975	Fulani Of Slave Origin	Women & Men	Elders	Fulfulde	Urban Nima	N/A	As and when Necessary
Suudu-Baaba	?	Fulani Of Madina	Men	Elders	Fulfulde	Urban Madina	?	?
Suudu-Baaba New Madina	On and off	Fulani Of New Madina	Men	Youth & Elders	Fulfulde	Peri-Urban New Madina	200 cedis per week	No longer functioning
Suudu-Baaba Asutsuare Junction	Jan 1997	Fulani Of Asutsuare Junction	Men	Youth & Elders	Fulfulde	Rural Asutsuare	500 cedis per week	?
Ashtaman	?	All Fulani	Men	Elders	?	urban Ashtaman	?	?
Suudu-Baaba	?	Fulani from Burkina Faso	Women	Youth & Elders	Fulfulde	Rural Afienyia	2,000 per week	?
Suudu-Baaba	On and off	All Fulani	Women	Youth & Elders	?	urban Ashtaman	*	?

\*Every Saturday each member brings 500 cedis. This is collected together and kept in the kitty in case someone becomes sick or there is a wedding or an out-dooring etc. In addition, every week each member brings 5,000 cedis and this is all given to one member (see Ardenner (1995: 201) on Rotating Credit Schemes). This is rotated amongst the members so that they each take it in turns to get a lump sum of cash. There are approximately twenty-five 'elders' and twenty-two 'youths'. In addition, each week, each member pays 100 cedis towards the cost of the chairs that they use in the meeting and another 20 cedis to the secretary of the meeting. 100 cedis is also collected to go towards the cost of buying plastic plates and cutlery for use on special occasions.

## National associations

As Mr. Toure indicated, there are 'different *suudu-baabas*' in Accra, however, the picture that he painted of many countries having their own associations in Accra was not completely accurate, at least not at the present time. He claimed that,

Niger people have their own, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cameroon, all of them have their own *suudu-baaba*, here in Nima.<sup>142</sup>

There were currently organizations in Accra representing Fulani from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Ghana. None existed however for those originating from other countries, such as Guinea, Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Mauritania, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.<sup>143</sup>

Fulani from countries which did not have their own ethnic association could and did attend *suudu-baabas* with different criteria for membership. However, there were barriers to attendance in some instances. A young, twenty-two-year-old, man from Guinea, Mohammed Gandu Bah, told me of his attempt to attend the meetings of one of the *suudu-baabas*, the Great Fulani Association in Nima:

I went to the *suudu-baaba* at Dunia Cinema, but I didn't stay there for long. When I heard the name *suudu-baaba*, I thought that it was Suudu- Fulbe (the House of Fulani), but I got there to find that they speak in Hausa so I stopped attending. There is no Guinean Association because we are not numerous here.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> A word of caution about the possible partiality of this particular informant. He was the chairman, and thus official spokesman, of this association and perhaps eager to paint an untarnished image of the work of *suudu-baaba*. He has been quoted at length throughout this chapter, partly for the sake of continuity and as a means to understand the rhetoric used in public discussions as compared with the reality of the situation uncovered over time.

<sup>143</sup> This is not to rule out the possibility of the existence of such associations in the past, or perhaps private ones today with few members.

<sup>144</sup> Mohammed Gandu Bah knew of 15 other Guinean Fulani in Accra, both men and

The association to which Mohammed referred, The Great Fulani Association (the *suudu-baaba* that organized the street parades mentioned in Chapter One) was established in Nima, urban Accra, by 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani (as the Vice President put it). Up until the establishment of this association, all *suudu-baabas* (organized on the basis of country of origin) were set up by individuals from countries outside Ghana. The emergence of a Ghanaian voice in the arena is evidence not only of the growing numbers of Ghanaian born Fulani but also of the very specific set of issues which confront them. Many second and third generation migrants speak little or no Fulfulde. The lingua franca of Nima is Hausa, and the youth and more specifically those born in Ghana were more likely to speak Hausa than Fulfulde as their first language.

This particular organization had the largest membership. Yet it was atypical of the majority of other smaller organizations. Despite having been set up by Ghanaian born Fulani, it aimed to unite all Fulani (irrespective of origins) whereas the majority of other Fulani ethnic associations in Accra were organized on the basis of specific countries of origin.

### Regional differentiation

One association, *Nassuru*,<sup>145</sup> is even more specific in its criteria for inclusion. It represents Fulani from the Mossi Plateau region of Burkina Faso. It was founded not on the grounds of a national unifying identity, but rather a regional identity within a national one. When it was founded on 4 February 1996 there were apparently eighty or so members. Now the number of men who actually attend the weekly Sunday morning meetings varies between fifteen and twenty. The

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women.

<sup>145</sup> According to the Chairman, the name *Nassuru* was chosen, because it means Victory.

association broke away from another called 'The BurkinaBe Unity Club,' which had been founded in 1993. Its membership had comprised first generation migrant men from the Mossi and Fulani ethnic groups of Burkina Faso. The Chairman of *Nassuru*, Ali Tal, said,

Formerly we were in another meeting called the BurkinaBe Unity Club. Because of the way that the meeting was run - no elections, no contributions, they always embezzle the funds. - We [tried to] force them to agree [to let] us...reorganize the meetings, but their only response was that we were newcomers, and that we had no right to try and unsettle them. So, the only thing we could do was withdraw ourselves and form another association.

In stating that those who wanted to change the association were 'newcomers' another distinction between Fulani in Accra was being made - newly arrived migrants were being differentiated from the settled, longer-term migrants.

The Chairman, Ali Tal, was one of those who, as he put it, 'fought to get it founded.' The association was formed not just by Fulani from Burkina Faso, but by those from a very specific geographical region within Burkina Faso. This is reflected in the original name of the *Nassuru* association, *Suudu-Baaba Mossi*.<sup>146</sup> I was told (though I found no evidence of it) that Fulani from the Doorri region had their own meetings as well as those from Yaaga and Djelgodji regions respectively.

It became clear that the divisions between the various Burkina Fulani groups were of a political nature. Certain individuals were jostling for political power and representation and were using their regional identity to attract support. Hagberg (1998: 135) notes the distinctions between various 'categories' of Fulani in Burkina Faso itself. In the region in which he conducted his own fieldwork, Comoé, he writes,

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<sup>146</sup> Some individuals attend both the *Nassuru* and the BurkinaBe Unity club. Adama Diallo, see case study below, is a case in point. Adama was born in Tenkodogo in Boulgo Province, Burkina Faso..

The category 'Fulbemossi' - Fulbe living close to the Mossi - is as much a summarising label. The two categories Boobolangôbe<sup>147</sup> and Fulbemossi constitute a central socio-political divide among Fulbe agro-pastoralists in the Comoé Province.

(Hagberg 1998: 135)

In Greater Accra the regional differences and tensions between Fulani from different regions, in this case within Burkina, affected the allegiances and alliances established and the organization of this particular *suudu-baaba*. In June 1994 the Chief of the Burkina Fulani died. An interim Chief had been appointed called Gidado Diallo. There were complaints from various Burkina Fulani that he was neither wealthy nor resourceful enough and that in particular he, 'hasn't got accommodation, he can't help or feed strangers.' Members (of the present day *Nassuru* Association, which was not founded at this time) had put forward one of its own members, a Fulbe Mossi, to be the new Chief, a man by the name of Hamidu Tal. This had caused tension in the Burkina Fulani community in Nima.<sup>148</sup>

### Age: The 'youth' & the 'elders'

Our fathers, the old men, have their own [association]...us, the children born here we realized that we...should help ourselves and set up one society.

(Mr. Toure)

The distinction that Mr. Toure made between the 'fathers' and the 'children' is an important one. It relates to the experiences of the different generations. The

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<sup>147</sup> Fulbe living in the country of the Bobo - in contrast to Jelgôbe (Djibo), Torobe (Ouahigouya), Fulbemossi etc. (Hagberg 1998: 135)

<sup>148</sup> The names of the men in question point to their clan affiliation. Gidado was a Diallo (not from the Mossi area) and Hamidu a Tal (no direct relation of Ali).



fathers are the first generation migrants, those who left their countries of origin for Ghana. The children represent the second and subsequent generations, those who were 'made-in-Ghana'. The distinction between youth and elders is a crucial one for, as we shall see, tensions and divisions have occurred between these two categories of people in the organization of *suudu-baaba* meetings.

Being a youth or an elder means different things for men and women. There is no strict or defined age at which a man or a woman moves from one category to another. Women progress from being considered youthful to being considered elders at a younger age than the men. A woman of forty, who married at the age of fifteen and who now has children and grandchildren, is no longer young. A man of the same age, however, may still be thought of as a youth. He may be as yet unmarried or he may have married recently, for the first time, and have young children. He is now building up his family and perhaps herds (if he is a herdsman) and may have another decade or more to go before being considered as an elder. A young man may choose to wear more Westernized clothes. An elder invariably wears more traditional robes.

What Mr. Toure meant by his statement, above, was that the fathers (first generation immigrants) chose to organize their *suudu-baabas* along lines of national allegiance. Some second and third generation Fulani have little or no experience of their parental home and a few speak little or no Fulfulde. Thus, in order to maintain a sense of their ethnic origins, they wanted an association that reflected their world.

The Great Fulani Association was founded in November 1994, with the aim to 'try and unite those who were born here' (Abdulrahman, Vice-Chairman). A division occurred, however, which resulted in members of this association establishing their own association in May 1996. The members who broke off, started a 'Youth Wing' of this *suudu-baaba*, calling themselves, The Great Fulani Association of Ghana Youth Wing.

Opinions differ as to why and how this split occurred. The Vice-Chairman of the original *suudu-baaba*, who was also a founding member, claimed that the younger members 'were causing trouble', and were therefore asked to leave and form their own association. He claimed that the older youth ('made-in-Ghana') asked the younger ones (those who wanted to establish their own association) to leave but demanded that the boys and girls form separate associations. The younger ones, according to the then Vice Chairman of the Great Fulani Association, Abdulrahman, agreed to split and set up their own association, but refused to keep the boys and girls apart.

Maladhor Ghede, a founding member of the Youth Wing, (and one of the most active women in the association) tells a different tale. She claims that the split occurred because the youth were more 'active' and progressive and wanted to embark on new ventures within the association, such as starting a welfare committee but that the elders opposed the idea and were too conservative and inflexible. Maladhor noted, 'Because of their old age, they were not active.' She also claimed that when it came to the turn of the younger members of the Great Fulani Association to receive money (for example in order to get married) the elders systematically refused to give it to them. Despite having created their own Youth Wing, most members of the Youth branch of the *suudu-baaba* also attend the general meeting of the Great Fulani Association.

## Sex

As can be seen from table number 6.1, both women and men have *suudu-baabas* in Accra. Some are for men only, others for women only, and a few are for both men and women. One of the associations whose members have chosen to associate not only on the basis of their being the same age but same sex as well is *Waldere Fulfulde*, (meaning an age cohort of Fulfulde speakers). *Waldere*

*Fulfulde* was established as recently as the 3 May 1996. One member of the group put it to me that,

Since our fathers came to Ghana there has been no young group ... we decided to meet [in order to] get to know one another. When we meet we meet as one. There is no differentiation, we have one mother and one father...some of us are from Burkina, some from Mali, some from Niger.

(Mohammadu Bashiru Bonkano a member of the *Waldere Fulfulde*)

All members were males between twenty and fifty years of age. It was claimed that there were a few female members in the past, but I saw no evidence of their attendance in the meetings at the present time. The members were born in various countries. This particular group also used the rhetoric of unity. One of the members put it to me that, 'Fulani are shepherds, they cross countries, meet others and unite.'

What separated this group from the Youth Wing of the Great Fulani Association was the important fact that all the meetings of *Waldere Fulfulde* Association were conducted in Fulfulde. The Great Fulani Association and its Youth Wing conducted all their meetings in Hausa:

Here [*Waldere*] we all speak Fulfulde, the other meeting, they are those who speak Hausa...we contribute towards giving help - but I don't think that theirs [meeting] is much.

(Bonkano)

As with many of the other associations the active membership of *Waldere* had fallen from over sixty members at its founding to a current membership of about thirty-four. There were never more than twenty people at the *Waldere* meetings, which met every Sunday morning at about 11 o'clock in the compound

of Jodoma Tal <sup>149</sup> (a founding member). The aim of the Association, as with most of the other associations, was to help out those in need, the sick, strangers, those about to get married. There seemed to be a much more important feature of this association and that was the building of friendship between the young men. During the meetings as much time was spent discussing private matters and joking amongst themselves as on the agenda of the day. At its inception 1,000 cedis per month was collected from all the members (250 cedis per week) however, due to the continuing devaluation of the cedi, it was decided on 6 April 1997 to increase the amount of money contributed to 500 cedis per week.

Many of the country-specific associations, particularly those organized by older first generation migrants, are run by and represent men. There are also women-only organizations, and many women meet regularly to help each other out in a less formalized and public fashion, (usually in the privacy of their own homes) to organize rotating credit and self-help groups.<sup>150</sup> The women's groups are less public and bureaucratic and more private than the men's ones. There are some, however, which are larger and more public than the others, one such association is the women's *Suudu-Baaba* in Ashaiman. (see Table 6.1). Apart from collecting dues for special occasions and for times of hardship among its members, it also functions as a rotating credit scheme, whereby each of the regular members takes it in turn to receive a lump sum of money each week.<sup>151</sup>

The associations established by 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani, welcome both men and women to their meetings. However, there is an obvious division of space in the meeting area according to sex. The Great Fulani Association's meetings took place in the inner courtyard of an outdoor cinema, Dunia Cinema, in Nima. The seating arrangements for the meetings in themselves told a tale about sex and

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<sup>149</sup> No relation to the other Tals mentioned.

<sup>150</sup> Ardener (1995: 201) defines a rotating credit scheme as, 'An association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation'. In Ghana such associations are known as 'susu' and are prevalent among market women, labourers, and low income non-Ghanaian immigrant groups.

<sup>151</sup> See Ardener 1995 for a comparative study of rotating schemes, and Bortei-Doku

age related divisions/relations. The men sat on one side of the inner courtyard and the women on the opposite side. The seating was further divided into - broadly speaking - youth and elders, married and unmarried.

The older married women were invariably dressed in various West African dress styles, Southern Ghanaian, 'Malian', or other distinct forms. They all had their heads covered with headscarves and veils. The younger unmarried girls sat in the same area as the older women, but they usually occupied different rows of seats. These young women, in general, tended to dress in a more western way. Very few had their heads uncovered (a sign that they were not yet married), some were young divorcees. The distinctions within the dress code of the men were very similar to the women's, with the older men wearing more traditional dress; the young men would often wear jeans, American-style baseball caps and various sportswear, tracksuits and trainers.

There are women's *suudu-baabas* formed by first generation migrants. For example there is a Burkina women's *suudu-baaba* in Nima, which has only recently started collecting money. As with the associations of the men, it was very difficult to ascertain the numbers of women-only *suudu-baabas*. The stories of past attempts and recent collapse were common. One, for example, spoke of the recent collapse of an association in Kasoa. It was for all Fulani women, no matter where they originated. The women, about forty members in all, attended every Saturday and contributed 1,000 cedis each. There were problems over the money, so it collapsed.

It is perhaps only in the Youth Wing of the Great Fulani Association that boys and girls (in the main unmarried or divorced) intermingle freely. While some men living in the rural areas can and do travel to attend meetings, rural-based older women, never do. It is really only urban-based older women (and younger girls living in peri-urban areas) who travel to attend these public gatherings in urban Accra. Married women living in rural and peri-urban locations tend not to

travel into town to attend meetings. One lady said that in all her years (she was over forty years old) she had never been to a *suudu-baaba*. However she actively encouraged her own daughter (unmarried, twenty year old, Amina) to attend. She was not against the principle of *suudu-baaba* and self help, but it was not seemly for her - as a well respected, older lady - to journey into town to attend these public meetings. She made do with hearing of *suudu-baaba*'s progress from her daughter.

All of the associations mentioned so far are located in the urban centres, and are all currently in existence and functioning. Several others are located in peri-urban and rural locations. Three in particular are worthy of note. One *suudu-baaba* is in Asutsuare junction, in the bush, serving the needs of all the male Fulani residing in this rural location. Another one is in Odumse (also in the bush), and another in New Madina.<sup>152</sup> The Asutsuare association was founded in January 1997. When I first encountered it, it had been in existence for just five months. It was in its early stages of formation and had not yet been given a name, nor had the individuals who were to form the executive been chosen. The founder of the Association, Sumaila Bah (first met in Chapter Five) said that it was for 'anyone who could express themselves in Fulfulde.'

### Slave born-free born

Fulani of slave (*maccube*) origin in Accra attended the *suudu-baaba* meetings of nobles. However no freeborn Fulani attended those exclusively for slaves. Some slave-origin Fulani have also set up their own self-help association. A musical group, whose members were all slave-born Fulani of Malian origin, established one such association. They often performed at Fulani weddings and out-doorings and the events of other ethnic groups. They had their own arrangements through

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<sup>152</sup> The two latter *suudu-baabas* (New Madina and Odumse) are not currently functioning. A few members wanted to set them up again in the future.

which they shared out money and helped each other out in times of need. When one member is informed of a forthcoming marriage or such-like he or she informs the others and they plan to meet and attend.

*Singing suudu-baabas: The case of the musical maccube from Mali*

Fatimata Gundo is the lead singer of a musical group. All members of the group are Fulani and all are of slave origin.<sup>153</sup> Gundo (as she is popularly and affectionately known) informed me that the group was established twenty-three years ago in Accra by her 'sister', Koro Maabo (not a real relative). It was founded by Fulani of slave origins in order to help one another out in different ways. For example, if one of the members gets married then the other members contribute 1,000 cedis each and three pieces of cloth collectively. When the group performs, all the money that a dancer gets is divided up between the members of the group as payment for their performance.

Gundo learned to sing by listening to and imitating her elder sister, Fanta, when they were both children growing up in Mopti, Mali. Her family had no tradition of singing and praise singing. Fanta however lost her singing voice after her mother got a local mallam to make some medicine to seize Fanta's voice. At the age of eleven, Gundo moved to Ghana to join and help Fanta, now newly married. She started attending weddings and other events and would sing. She sings the praises of the bride and groom, their families and invited guests, who pay her for her praise.

In the musical group there are no 'pure' Fulani, they are all considered to be (and consider themselves) of slave origin, because (as Gundo said) 'we are considered Fulani because we were born amongst them.'<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>

The members of the musical group

Gundo- Singer; Kalfa- Flautist; Oumou Maabo - plays tummbude (calabash); Aminata Janngi - plays tummbude (calabash); Aissata - singer (responds to Gundo's songs); Aamadu - plays the drums (dondo) the hour-glass shaped drum that is played under the arm; Mohammadu Alhamdi - collects the money.

<sup>154</sup>

Gundo claims that her mother's father's father was sold as a slave to her father's father's father.

*Musical performance at a wedding*





## Organization of *suudu-baabas*

Each Fulani association is organized in basically the same way. Most have an executive committee, comprising a chairperson, one or several vice chairpersons, a secretary and a secretary's assistant, an organizing secretary and a treasurer. Some of them have what they call 'advisers'. Others also have a mallam who opens and closes the meetings with prayers. For the *suudu-baabas* made up of Fulani born in Ghana, their advisers are older members of the Fulani community, who give advice on matters of 'tradition'. The ordinary members elect all the executive members. Literate individuals invariably fill positions such as chairman, secretaries and treasurer. Advisers and other such positions are not necessarily literate. In most cases the executive is interim, and what usually happens is that the founding members hold the positions of responsibility with the promise of an election to come.

Only the Great Fulani Association and its Youth Wing had written constitutions, all the other associations claimed to be in the process of making one or had one but couldn't find a copy to show me! The only written constitution that I was actually able to obtain was for the Youth wing of The Great Fulani Association.

All of the associations routinely collected dues from their members on a regular basis. This money was in theory kept by an appointed person or persons until such a time as it was required. Some associations, such as the Great Fulani Association, opened a bank account. On special occasions - a naming ceremony, a marriage, a death in the community etc. - members are often called upon to provide an extra donation for those involved. There are other occasions though when it was deemed inappropriate to give donations of money. One such is when a member of the community has a child out of wedlock. However the exact amount of money to be paid at special occasions was often the cause of

controversy and disagreement among the members of some of the associations. In *Waldere* for example, the members (all young men) were divided as to whether 10,000 or 5,000 cedis was an appropriate amount to pay individually to the couple.

### **Membership & meetings**

Membership of these associations is neither universal nor compulsory but rather voluntary, although new members are actively encouraged to join and members who are lax in their attendance are jokingly reproached (and sometimes fined). On the whole, the 'ordinary' members (as opposed to the members of the executive committees) are poorly educated people on low incomes. Most members have uncertain, unregulated employment in the informal sector.

Members of the Great Fulani Association and its Youth Wing included young unmarried girls who claimed to be seamstresses or hairdressers. (It was not always easy to verify this.) Some of the men were unemployed. Others worked as night security men, traders, tailors, drivers, clerks, mechanics. The older married women were mostly at home, although some traded in provisions. Acquah (1958) also noted a tendency for the members of Fulani ethnic associations to be poorly educated in Accra in the 1950s:

For illiterates, especially from the north, the tribal association, as well as the tribal head, provides an avenue through which news circulates. People are regularly leaving Accra; others are arriving, and messages can easily be sent and received...The well-educated person, in the main, is not a member of a tribal association. He joins associations which cut across tribal lines.

(Acquah 1958: 106)

The total number of people present at any one of the weekly meetings of The Great Fulani Association and other associations was variable. It ranged from

none (when for instance it rained, or there was a sudden crisis in the community, such as the death of a member of the Fulani community) to forty or more. For most of the ordinary members, the association only takes up a couple of hours of their time a week (depending on the nature of the issues to be discussed), sometimes not even that.

Membership of one group does not in any way prohibit membership of another. This is illustrated by the case of a Burkina Fulani man called Adama Diallo.

### *The case of Adama Diallo*

‘However full the sea, it always needs water’

Since coming to Ghana from Burkina Faso in 1987, Adama has been a member of five different Fulani ethnic associations, in Nima, Accra. At present, he attends three meetings regularly: The Great Fulani Association, *Nassuru* Association and *Waldere Fulfulde*. He used to be a member of a group called *suudu-baaba* Fulbe Bawku, an organization for Fulani from Bawku. According to Adama, this *suudu-baaba* was founded about five years ago; Adama joined over two years ago. The association collapsed in early 1997. When he first joined there were ten active members, however the numbers diminished until the whole thing collapsed. Money problems had caused the Bawku *suudu-baaba* to disintegrate. Adama also used to attend the BurkinaBe Unity Club, but stopped attending regularly when a dispute broke out among its members as to who should be chosen as the new Burkina Chief.<sup>155</sup>

Of all the members of the various associations, Adama was the most conspicuous. He seemed to be everywhere at once. Many of the meetings took place at similar times on a Saturday and Sunday morning. He would therefore often turn up late to meetings because he had just left a previous one. When Adama first came to Ghana - in order to seek medical attention - he did not know anyone, and he has therefore relied heavily on the Fulani network to find friends and support.

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<sup>155</sup> The same dispute mentioned earlier in the chapter.

In Adama's case, all of the associations he attended were in Nima. He lived there and therefore could easily walk to all the meetings. Not all the members, of the various associations, lived in Nima. Some came from other areas. Hamidu Dem,<sup>156</sup> the Senegalese teacher, for instance, came from Odumse, about 30 kilometres away, to address the Great Fulani Association. One elderly man, who was always regular in his attendance of the Great Fulani Association's meetings, was Aamadu Bukari. In order to attend the meetings he travelled from Ashaiman, 30 kilometres away, where he lived with his mother and sister. He was usually hard up for money and would often tell me that he couldn't go back home until he had 'found' the lorry fare home.

All of the associations held meetings on a regular basis. Most met on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Meetings would vary in length, depending upon the time that they started. All would finish by one o'clock in time for prayer. Most took place on a weekly basis. Others met once a month. There were frequently reasons why a meeting could not take place. In the rainy season, if it rained or threatened to in the morning, then it would generally be accepted that the meetings would not take place. If there was a wedding or an out-dooring, towards which the association had contributed money, then the regular meeting would not take place. Instead transport would be provided by the association to ferry members to the event.

While Adama (above) enjoyed attending the meetings of several different *suudu-baabas*, others such as Huseini Seidi from Mali attended only their own specific *suudu-baaba* (in his case *Boyana* <sup>157</sup> for Malian Fulani men). He didn't attend any others because he said, '...they are for small boys.'

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<sup>156</sup> See Hamidu Dem's story in Chapter Five.

<sup>157</sup> Huseini Seidu, who among others informed me about the Malian *suudu-baaba*, said that when he arrived in Nima 16 years ago, this Malian association was already in existence, and that in Mali they call such associations, *Boyana* and not *Suudu-Baaba*. *Boyana* had collapsed three months prior to my meeting him, he said that the money (from the kitty) had been wasted and spent, a small group of them were trying to revive the association and were still meeting on a weekly basis. But they wanted to change the name from *Boyana* to something else.

Many of the first generation migrant men have been members of *suudu-baabas* or similar ethnic associations in other parts of West Africa. They have joined associations and attended meetings when they are away from home, as well as in their hometowns or countries of origin. While it is certain that similar associations exist throughout West Africa, not all are known as *suudu-baaba*.<sup>158</sup>

### Leadership

[Our] fathers started *suudu-baaba* in about 1973, [it] stopped. The chairman Amadu Banya died, and they chose another one, Ibrahim Sambo, later on he died and instead of them continuing on, they scattered and forgot everything.

Mohammed Toure

The above statement indicates a common feature of these *suudu-baaba* organizations, namely their reliance on the guidance of a few strong leaders. Often when these figureheads are no longer there, as in the death of the leader (in the above quotation), the association cannot function and dissolves, or internal wrangling and power struggles ensue. In general terms, the leaders of the main ethnic associations fall into two broad categories. There are leaders who are chiefs, who are illiterate and may have worked in their younger days in a variety of different occupations, and whose status derives from their authority and respect as such. More commonly the criteria upon which leaders are chosen or emerge are based upon their ability to read and write.

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<sup>158</sup> In Cameroon for example there is an association called, MBOSCUDA, 'The Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association of Cameroon'; a 'non-partisan, non-profit making socio-cultural NGO'. According to the organization's newsletter, the 'overall objective of the MBOSCUDA is to ameliorate the standards of living of the Mbororo of Cameroon'. See Davis (1995).

Many Fulani men and women, particularly those who had lived for extended periods of time in other West African states, had attended associations similar to the *Suudu-Baabas* they attended in Greater Accra.

The following case study is of an attempt to set up a *suudu-baaba* in New Madina. The time between its inception and its disintegration is relatively short. The role of one man, the founder and leader, was crucial to the success of this association, but once he was no longer there, the association collapsed.

### *A New Madina case study*

In 1996, there was an attempt to establish a *Suudu-Baaba* in New Madina. Husein Tal, a son of the late Alhaji Tal came on a visit to Ghana from Holland where he is currently domiciled. Husein decided that the Fulani families of New Madina (the Diallo, Tal and Barry families, see Chapter Four) should come together in order to help each other by forming an association and collecting dues. His idea was well received. The reasoning behind the decision to establish a *suudu-baaba* was as follows,

Here (New Madina) is developing [rapid population growth and construction work] and our children have been going to school but there is no Arabic school, no police station...it [*suudu-baaba*] is just to help the government in some way, maybe [we could] build a mosque...it is [also] to help someone who comes from our town [visitors].

(Nuuru-Diin Mohammed Ahmed. Grandson of the late Alhaji Barry)

The plan was to get all the adult members of each household, those over the age of eighteen, to contribute 200 cedis on a weekly basis. The money was to be collected and saved towards the establishment of the above mentioned projects. However the momentum for change and the desire to help each other in this way, lasted only as long as Husein's trip to New Madina from Holland. Nuuru-Diin said, 'It was in operation for two months, while Husein was around, and then when he left, it collapsed'.

The money had been collected by one representative from each of the three families and given to Issa Diallo (the best educated of all the Fulani residents in New Madina and the son of Alhaji Diallo). However since Husein's departure no one has asked Issa about the money, and those who were contributing have stopped.

The older women in the three families were asked, by the men, to become the treasurers of the association. They refused.

This particular attempt at establishing a *suudu-baaba* was very short lived. The drive to establish a weekly meeting where money was collected and saved for the development of future projects seems to have been reliant upon the enthusiasm and guidance of one individual, the leader of the *suudu-baaba*, namely Husein. His enthusiasm, direction and above all his physical presence were key factors in the establishment and success of this project. Once Husein was gone, so too was the impetus for change. There was also a sense that once Husein returns for another trip to Ghana, the association might begin again. At the moment things have been left at an impasse. Nuuru said, 'When Husein comes back, we'll hold a meeting and see if they want to keep contributing or not'.

## **Aims & objectives: 'Public issues'**

The official aims and objectives of most of the associations appear to be similar. They aim to provide financial and moral support for their members and their members' families. They help in the organization of weddings, out-doorings and funerals, as well as helping the sick and strangers. Acquah noted, in her own examination of 'Tribal Associations' in Accra some thirty years ago, that,

It has been observed that the majority of tribal associations in Accra are, in practice, mere benefit societies. No monetary assistance or other organized help is given to people in the place of origin. This place may be referred to in sentimental terms, but effective interest in it had waned. *The main purpose of the association is to provide help and fellowship in Accra.*

(Acquah 1958: 106, my emphasis)

In a context where there is no such thing as institutionalized public welfare, one has to look out for one's own (and one's community) interests. Sumaila Bah, a founder member of the Asutsuare Junction *Suudu-Baaba* said,

When you have a long bit of wood and you want to stand it upright - if you are the only one pushing will it stand up?

This is the reply Sumailah Bah gave when asked why he had founded a *suudu-baaba* in rural Asutsuare Junction. Sumaila Bah continued that, when he first arrived in the area, he met many Fulani and realized that if they were to help one another and co-operate among themselves then he believed that they could all progress and have a 'good life' together.

At the heart of many of the accounts of the formation of *suudu-baabas* is the rhetoric of self help, Fulani helping Fulani to build better lives for themselves, to alleviate pain, and provide moral and financial support in times of crisis.

If there is a death we all come together and perform the funeral, if someone marries then we will do it. If something like an outdooring happens then we all meet up.

Adama Diallo (see 'The case of Adama Diallo') knows all too well the potential problems faced by a newly arrived stranger in Accra with no family for support, especially when they are sick and in need of moral and financial help. 'One day you'll have a problem and if *suudu-baaba* knows that you have a good character, they will help you.'

## Unity

At the heart of many of the accounts of the rationale behind the establishment of *suudu-baabas* is the rhetoric of self-help; Fulani helping Fulani to build better lives for themselves and to support each other (morally and financially) in good times (marriage, naming) and bad (sickness, death). Many of the *suudu-baabas* claim that one of their aims is to unite Fulani, whether those from their particular country of origin or all Fulani. The founders of the *suudu-baaba* established by the Ghana-born Fulani (The Great Fulani Association) in particular felt the need to unite everyone, young and old, men and women, from different countries. This was most publicly demonstrated in the 'Unity' banner draped across the car



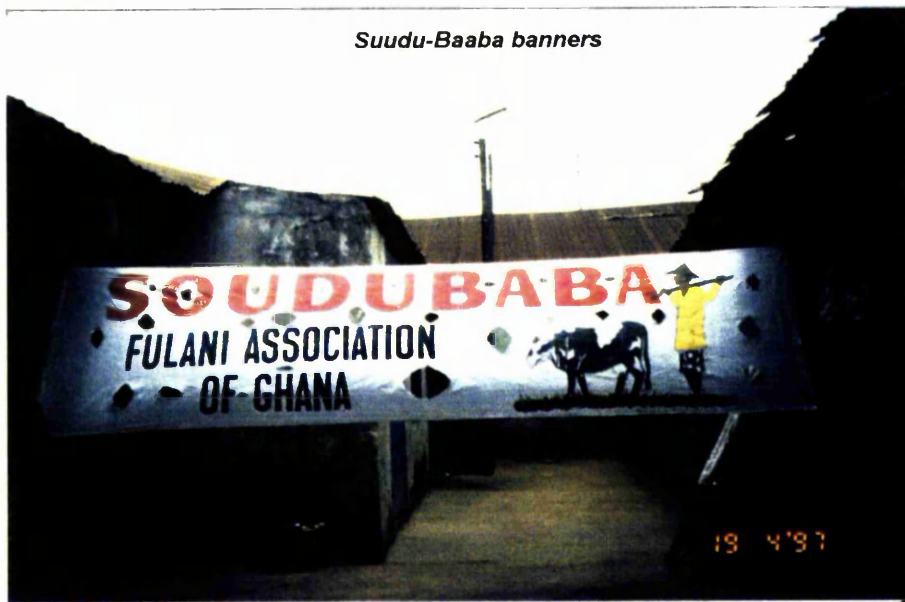
bonnet during the Ramadan procession (see Chapter One). The then Chairman said,

Us, the children born here, we know that we are from different countries, but if you look at it, our language is one. We realized that we, the children, should help ourselves and set up one society, not for Malians or BurkinaBe, but one *sundu-baaba*, if you are a Fulani then that is all...

Mohammed Toure

The rationale for the establishment of 'The Great Fulani Association' deserves closer attention for, although atypical of the majority of associations, it is perhaps the most public and well known of all the Fulani associations in Accra today. Founded on 26 November 1994 as 'The Fulani Association of Ghana', the name was changed in 1996 to 'The Great Fulani Association'. The 'Ghana' part of the name was dropped, as it was viewed as counter-productive. It was decided that emphasizing 'Ghana' in the title was drawing unnecessary attention to it. 'Ghana' highlighted the fact that they were trying to justify their position as Ghanaians rather than taking for granted that they are.

Suudu-Baaba banners



The official symbol and badge of membership used and stamped on the identity cards of the members is a cowherd following his cow. The aims and objectives of the Youth Wing<sup>159</sup> are, (according to the written constitution)<sup>160</sup>

1. 'To assist and promote good relationship among FULANI YOUTH and HELP them in time of difficulties
2. To unite and Mobilize all Fulani Under one Umbrella.
3. To rally FULANI YOUTH to under take and support important project in the course of ISLAM and the FULANI COMMUNITY in general.
4. The Association may take any ventures. Non Partisan Association'.

The constitution of the Youth Wing gives a clear indication of the priorities set by the association in terms of its aim and objectives. The first is the promotion of good relationships between the Fulani youth, as well as helping out in times of difficulties. The second clause that of unity, seeks to mobilize *all* Fulani.

The need to unite was felt not only by those who were born in Ghana but also by other Fulani from different countries. While The Great Fulani Association sought to unite Fulani irrespective of their country of origin, other groups wanted to 'unite' only those from their country. The president of the *Nassuru* Association (Fulani from the Mossi plateau) insisted that the aim of his association was, 'to unite BurkinaBe Fulani'. According to him, the Fulani from the Mossi plateau form the largest community of Fulani in Burkina Faso and also in Ghana. He said,

Our aims and objectives are: To unite BurkinaBe Fulani; to enlighten them about happenings here in Ghana; to act as intermediaries between them and our BurkinaBe government; to help them from time to time to settle their social and political problems.

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<sup>159</sup> Despite repeatedly enquiring, it was not possible to get a copy of the constitution of the Great Fulani Association, I was informed however that it is similar to that of the Youth Wing.

<sup>160</sup> All mistakes as in the original version.

This rhetoric of unity was being used despite the very restricted and regional nature of this particular association. The Great Fulani Association sought to counteract the divisive nature of the majority of *suudu-baabas*.

Burkina and Mali can't come together and have a meeting, Burkina does its [meetings] separate, Mali separate, Niger separate... but ours is a united body, whether you are from Burkina, Mali.... We box together, our aim is to unite.

(Abdulrahman, then Vice Chairman of Great Fulani Association)

The professed unity of the Fulani is publicly symbolized in the identity cards and letterheads of some of the associations (see copy of membership card of The Great Fulani Association). All of these use the cow as their emblem of unity and sameness. At the street parades celebrating the end of Ramadan the banners proudly held aloft for all of Nima to see had a painting of a Fulani man, following a cow (see Chapter One). The women were balancing large calabashes of milk on their heads.

In order to be united the members of the Fulani community in Greater Accra need to know each other and need to be able to recognize their fellow Fulani as they pass them in the streets and in everyday interaction. The ability to recognize one another as Fulani in Accra was seen as very important in the decision to found the Great Fulani Association. Nima is a densely populated area of Accra, a large proportion of its inhabitants are Muslim and are perceived by local host populations as being migrants. There are many ethnic groups represented here originating from all over West Africa. The fact that one can get 'lost' (in a metaphorical sense) in this part of Accra and not be 'recognized' as being Fulani by fellow Fulani is a potential problem, especially since there is no Fulani quarter or area of the city which is exclusively Fulani. As the Chairman put it:

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Every time we meet we see that we too are Fulani people; if we meet on the road then I know that you are my brother; if you meet me on the road then you know that I am your brother. If it wasn't for this [*suudu-baaba*] we wouldn't know ourselves.

The *suudu-baaba* has enabled people to recognize one another as Fulani, as having something in common. This applies not only in Nima, but when people meet in other parts of the city and country.<sup>161</sup> On some levels though, it is clear who is and who is not a Fulani. This goes back to the ideas of what a Fulani 'should' look like, the first criteria being fair (red) skin. In practice many Fulani are far from the 'ideal' colour of red. The Chairman of The Great Fulani Association was himself a very dark skinned man and therefore modified the perceived ideal of a Fulani in order to accommodate his own shade of skin. He stated that,

With us Fulani we have red as well as black [skinned people]. If the red man sees the black he won't know that he is Fulani. If the black sees the red he knows that he is Fulani. If I saw you [me, the anthropologist] on the street I would think that you are Fulani

The need for recognition goes further than simply meeting an individual on the street and knowing that, like you, he or she is Fulani. At the level of the state the *suudu-baaba* also wants recognition of the Fulani presence in Ghana. As the members of this particular association are mainly Ghanaian born, many consider themselves to be Ghanaian. As the older generation of their mothers and fathers dies so too do the links that once existed with these countries. As Mr. Toure stated,

I know that my father came here in around 1917; he was here for a long time before he had us children. So now we don't have anywhere to go but here [Ghana]. They [his father's generation] are the ones who know where they can go to. Even if we go there [to our fathers

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<sup>161</sup> This was made very real to me, the anthropologist, I would often find that people recognized me and would call out my name to catch my attention when I was in various parts of Accra, driving my car, walking in the street. I would not always immediately recognize the person who was calling out to me, however the shouted phrase "*suudu-baaba*" from the person would make me able to situate them immediately.

home-town], we couldn't stay, because everything of ours is here...So this is why we decided to do our own *suudu-baaba*.

He also noted that, 'Ghana also has Fulani. If you [mention all] the tribes of Ghana, we should also be among.'<sup>162</sup>

The definition of who is and who is not a Fulani, and therefore who is and who is not eligible for membership in the Great Fulani Association, appears to be rather fluid. However, having at least one parent who is Fulani is sufficient for membership:

*Suudu-baaba*, either your mother is Fulani or your father, because of the breast. If your mother is Fulani, and your father is [a] different type, we like you because you are a brother to us, because of the breast.<sup>163</sup>

Mohammed Toure

If an individual has one parent who is Fulani then that individual may choose or be forced on occasion to identify with their non-Fulani ethnic identity. Mr. Toure increased the circle of inclusiveness to embrace many other ethnic groups and peoples as Fulani:

So in Kwara State [Nigeria] there are Yorubas, but they are originally ...Fulani, so sometimes we are together with them in Suudu-Baaba. Those from Sudan, even Togo, we get Kotokolis, but they are Fulanis, originated from Fulanis. You get some of them you can hear Diallo, Toure [their names and clan names]. There is nobody who gets these names apart from Fulanis...

Knowing who other Fulani in Accra are (through *suudu-baaba*), and wanting to be 'united' with them, necessarily entails knowing and finding out about what is going on in their lives,

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<sup>162</sup> This directly contradicts much of the literature, which assumes that there are no Fulani of Ghanaian origin (Bernardet 1989: 7).

<sup>163</sup> The idea that your identity as a Fulani is passed on to you through your mother's milk.

When [before] we have the meeting, you don't know what has happened. This is where you will hear that so and so has died, or we have an out-dooring tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, or on Sunday we have a marriage. If we didn't all come together we wouldn't hear all of this...

Mohammed Toure

### Conserving customs

Every time we do something, we do it according to custom, so that we don't get left behind.

Mohammed Toure

A concern of the Ghana-born Fulani was to safeguard and conserve their Fulani customs and know the correct way to perform their traditions. The preservation of Fulani custom and tradition was a crucial factor in the decision to establish the Great Fulani Association. Mr. Toure links the losing of Fulani custom with getting 'left behind' and becoming 'lost':

We shouldn't get lost or divide up or take other customs that are not our own. *If everyone takes their own customs they will never get lost*, your children and your grandchildren will [grow up] knowing that this is where I am from. If we don't do it like this then we will be lost, and so will the [Fulani] name.

In other words, without knowledge of how to 'be' Fulani and 'perform' Fulani custom and tradition, Fulani born in Accra will not know where they are from or where they are going. They will take up customs that are not their own, perhaps Hausa customs or those of any of the other ethnic groups among whom they live in Accra, and their 'road will get spoilt.' Their future as Fulani will be in doubt.

The custodians of this knowledge (Fulani customs and traditions) are the fathers and mothers, those born outside of Ghana: 'When we don't know how to do something then we go and see our old fathers, and they show us how to do it.' The worry expressed by the founders of the Great Fulani Association (and endorsed by its members) is that their mothers and fathers (first generation migrants) are dying and their large body of traditional knowledge dies with them.

Our...fathers and mothers are now old, they are going [dying] one by one, if we don't try hard then one day if you're looking for a Fulani in Ghana you won't find one anymore. This is the thinking that led us to see that we must meet up, us Fulani children who were born here [Ghana], we should come together and see that this is where we are from, this [Accra] is our town.

Mohammed Toure

### Concluding remarks

No matter how many *suudu-baabas* emerge and collapse, no matter their criteria for inclusion and exclusion, no matter if or how they organize their meetings, they have made their mark on the public scene of Accra, as well as in the private lives of their members. They have organized their own street parades to celebrate their unique identity as a people in Accra, as well as showing solidarity and support with their muslim brothers and sisters. In short many people have been helped by *suudu-baabas*. One of the ultimate goals of the Ghana born Fulani, as expressed by their then Chairman, Mr. Toure, was to have a Fulani voice in Accra and establish their presence irrevocably:

If you look at it, in the time of Gold Coast, the Fulani and the Hausa were the first ones to come to Ghana, so we shouldn't now become the last.

In Chapter One a quotation by Riesman stated that, 'A Fulani has no feeling for the Fulani as an ethnic group' (Riesman 1984: 180). Riesman may have been



referring to the Fulani peoples among whom he worked, but he implied that this was the case for all Fulani. The evidence presented here suggests that this is not the case in Greater Accra. The *suudu-baabas* encountered are all evidence of community-based associations working for the welfare of their members. However, it could be argued that the very existence of so many different *suudu-baabas*, representing different 'kinds' of Fulani, is proof of the lack of an overall sense of community between and among all the individuals who self identify as Fulani.

As noted in Chapter Three, two opposing forces are working simultaneously. These are centripetal and centrifugal in nature. On the one hand, the centripetal forces are leading to the constant creation of associations and self-help groups. On the other hand they have a tendency towards disintegration. However, the very fact that certain Fulani individuals are drawn towards participating in one, or sometimes several, of these *suudu-baabas* points to the sense in which communities exist.

For Adama (see 'The case of Adama Diallo'), and many other individuals, *suudu-baabas* have literally saved their lives. They have provided financial support and moral guidance during difficult times in their lives. For these individuals, *suudu-baabas* are part of a larger survival strategy. They are a means of surviving in Greater Accra and a way of making their members live up to their social obligations.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### ***Performance & identity: Conflict & contradiction in social drama***

Culture viewed as speech, gesture, and action is performance.

(Tuan 1990: 236)

...the performative genre...is reciprocal and reflexive – in the sense that the performance is often a critique, direct or veiled, of the social life it grows out of, an evaluation (with lively possibilities of rejection) of the way society handles history.

(Turner 1988: 22)

...the social drama or micro-history is ideally compatible with the presentation of society as fragmentary and as founded on fictions more than facts of social perpetuity. It ought, after all, to be the best method of portraying the inconsistencies which players in a social drama often claim as perduring principles. Society may be fragmentary but it is also continuous conversation and exchange.

(Parkin 1996: xviii)

This chapter focuses on performances and dramas, ritual ceremonies and celebrations as well as dramatic episodes in the lives of Fulani in Greater Accra. These cultural performances and social dramas<sup>164</sup> are in a sense a methodological metaphor for the exploration of issues of conflict and contradiction among and between actors and audiences in Greater Accra today (Parkin 1996: xv).

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<sup>164</sup> 'Overlapping but not identical concepts' (Bailey 1996:1).

Occasions and events are considered in which the criteria involved in 'what it means to be Fulani' are invoked, as well as the tensions and disagreements therein. These tensions illustrate some of the views and perspectives taken in Greater Accra as to the 'correct', 'traditional', ways that Fulani should behave, look, comport themselves, talk, dance, etc. - often viewed as being at odds in a 'modern' Ghanaian ('non-traditional') context.

The performances include examples of rites of passage, public street parades and festivals, as well as routine encounters and conversations. They represent everyday life events (social ritual) as well as special ceremonies and observances (religious ritual) (Schechner 1988: 11). These rituals are an inherent part of everyday existence. They represent both 'public' culture and 'private' life (Comaroff 1993: xviii).

What is meant by performance is ambiguous. It is not easy to define or locate, for as Schechner notes, 'It is ethnic and intercultural, historical and ahistorical, aesthetic and ritual, sociological and political. Performance is a mode of behaviour, an approach to experience; it is play, sport, aesthetics, popular entertainments, experimental theatre, and more' (Schechner 1988: 4). The examples explored encompass many of these genres.

Some of the performances discussed are discrete and discernible 'units' of observation. They are performed in a given place, space and time. They are enacted for a specific occasion by a set of performers with an audience. The weddings and street parade are examples of this. Others of the stories recounted are of a more quotidian nature and are less bound by space and time, actors and audiences. A distinction between these two is often in terms of public and private. Some are accessible to all members of society; others are exclusive to some.

Schechner observes that,

what is performed is encoded...nested, trapped, contained...In one, or more, special kinds of communication, either as a mixture of narrative

and individual creativity...or as a well known sequence of events...or as closely guarded secrets revealed to initiates during the performance itself...[these are]...mere smatterings of evidence of the incredible diversity of performance events.

(Schechner 1985: 118)

What I want to highlight from the above quotation are two important features of 'performance' and of this chapter. First of all, the diversity of the types of events that can be labelled performance events and secondly the view that these events '[encode]...special kinds of communication.' The focus is on what these performances are communicating about the nature of the Fulani experience in Greater Accra. Public, 'cultural performances' provide perfect points of entry into a community's symbolic, economic, social, and political life. They are organized and performed for members of the community by members of the community and are also aimed at 'outsiders' in order for them to 'get the message of the community' (Farber 1983: 33-34). This is precisely why they are ideal sites for study and analysis.

Celebrations and performances have both an interpretive as well as an instrumental relationship with the 'social realities' of those experiencing them. They are interpretive in the sense that they are a 'distinctive part of the cultural repertory, through which a people gain perspective on their situation.' They are instrumental in that celebrations provide important means through which a people can 'proclaim their identity and fashion their sense of purpose' (Manning 1983: x).

The 'problem' with ritual is the very duality of its nature. For on the one hand every ritual has its formalized, sometimes rigid, aspects, yet the potential for variation on the other hand is often great (Tambiah 1985: 124). This often leaves room for improvisation, on the part of the participants/actors and room for interpretation on the part of the audience. In this ambiguous space, left between the formal and improvisation/interpretation, conflicts and tensions often arise. The focus is on the nature of these crises and tensions in Greater Accra today (Schechner 1988: 7).

The stories and vignettes discussed represent some of the myriad ways in which aspects of Fulani ethnic, social and individual identities are constructed and contested, maintained and manipulated. Tensions and ambiguities are apparent in all the cases presented.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, vignettes and stories are used to illustrate the ways in which ideas of Fulani 'sameness and difference' are discussed and portrayed. In the second section, 'rhetoric and reality', the ways in which people speak of Fulani unity - and the rhetoric they employ - are explored in contrast to the 'contestible' realities of their situation (Parkin 1996: xx). In other words ideal norms are contrasted with actual observable behaviour. The third part focuses on the tensions in traditions apparent in some of the major public and private events in the lives of Fulani in Greater Accra.

## Sameness & difference

From 1994 till now, no-one can challenge us at the Sallah celebrations. [Before 1994 they [Accra Muslims] used to do the Sallah day celebrations but the Fulani were not part of it]. When it came to Sallah it was *suudu-baaba* who did everything. We made our contributions. We hired the cars for the Chiefs to sit in. The ladies and young men we made them one dress [costume] so that when you saw them you would know that it was the Fulani who were coming. Did you see us drinking milk in the streets? Now we know that we have gone home, we are in Ghana but we remember our home....

Mohammed Toure

...it is apparent that festivals are about identity, whether personal or social, and they are the context and the process of creating links between people in the community, as well as between the community and the wider national and cultural environment. The importance of history and its enactment and re-enactment in the present seems to be an especially important element.

(Farber 1983: 54)

In analysing the 'Street Parade',<sup>165</sup> one can observe that there are various ways in which Fulani identity is being portrayed, all in the name of 'unity'. The first can be considered as a type of 'confederation' in which various elements, in this case chiefs representing different nationalities, which make up the Fulani experience, are simultaneously presented. The second situation is 'rotational', in which rather than present all the diversity, for instance of national costume, at once, turns are being taken each year to display aspects of it.

### Confederation of identities

During the festival we [had] four chiefs...one from Mali, one from Burkina, one from Niger and then the Nigerian Fulani...The four in the car are from different countries. But they do their own thing [they have their own *suudu-baaba* meetings].

Abdulrahman

The Sallah street parades held to celebrate the end of the Muslim fasting period of Ramadan provided a perfect public arena for the celebration of Fulani identity on the streets of Accra. (See Chapter One for description.) The four Fulani chiefs, squashed onto the back seat of a car and representing their various countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria) had, draped across the bonnet of their car, a banner which read 'Unity'.

The idea of processing together was not of the chiefs' making. This had been suggested, and arranged, by the executive of the Great Fulani Association,

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<sup>165</sup> Mitchell's (1956) Kalela Dance contributed a pioneering methodological illustration of the ways in which a 'performance' can be analysed. This was achieved through the deconstruction and decontextualization of the various elements of the dance, in order to understand their historical and social significance.

the 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani. The street parade was organized by, and represented the views and opinions of, the 'made-in-Ghana' youth. In other words, with the advice of the elders, members of the executive, as well as 'advisors' and 'ordinary' members, took the decisions on how to portray and represent the Fulani to the public in Accra.

The aim of bringing these chiefs together was to represent the Fulani in Accra, and by extension the whole of West Africa, as united. The repertoire of Fulani customs, traditions and experiences that the Fulani in Ghana are able to draw upon is immense. Therefore, rather than choose one chief to represent all the Fulani, at the risk of insulting and/or alienating the others, the decision was taken to celebrate several of the different options (countries of origin) at once.

The four chiefs may have been together in that car, occupying the same space and time, but this was a very rare occasion for them all to be sitting together. After all, they represent different Fulani populations who often have their own associations and meetings (see Chapter Six). The representation of the chiefs, and hence all Fulani populations, as unified is comparable to that of a confederation, a Fulani confederation, with the different sections (in this case countries) of Fulani society being represented by a single chief.

The parade publicized the existence of a diverse Fulani community in Accra. This celebration created a feeling of 'spontaneous [community]' (Schechner 1988: 15). Individuals from outlying areas came to visit their family and friends in Nima to witness and enjoy the parade. It created a feeling of Fulani unity and pride, togetherness and sameness, at least for some of the Fulani observers and participants – the ones with whom I witnessed the parade. It also created a tradition likely to be perpetuated in subsequent street parades.<sup>166</sup>

In this instance, different elements of Fulani society were being celebrated simultaneously. In space and time, this confederation only lasted as long as the

street parade did, for this was a fabricated and short-lived unity. With the ending of the parade, the chiefs went their separate ways.

As Schechner recognizes,

narratives abound after the event, they explain that event, extol it, ethicize it, excuse it, deprecate it, repudiate it, name it as a significant marker of collective life-experience, as a model for future behavior.

(Schechner 1988: 15)

For days after the event, there was much talk among Fulani, and between Fulani and other participants and witnesses of the parade. They discussed how successful the procession had been and how well the Fulani had acquitted themselves; how the Fulani had been the 'best'; had made the most effort; had 'won'. This sentiment was also expressed by the then Chairman, 'Since we started doing the games on the street...for the last three years we are the ones who have won.'

There was a sense of play and experimentation in the performance, and in the decisions taken regarding its form and content. The parade was akin to a drama in that it was a 'pretence at something else' (Parkin 1996: xxi). That something else was a united Fulani community, comfortable in its celebration of its national and cultural diversity.

While some aspects of Fulani identity were simultaneously presented, so as to create a sense of 'unity' and sameness, others were celebrated for their diversity and difference as the following example illustrates.

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<sup>166</sup> See Bierschenk 1993 on the 'creation' of Fulani chieftaincy in Benin.



## Rotational identity

This year it was the Nigerian Fulani dress that we chose, last year we used the Burkina dress. God willing next year we will chose a different dress...

(Mohammed Toure)

When it came to deciding what costumes those in the Sallah day street parade should wear, the choice was wide and the costumes were perceived as diverse, therefore a compromise decision was reached. The executive members of the Great Fulani Association decided that the best thing to do was to rotate the styles of dress annually according to the costumes worn by different Fulani populations in different countries.

It was difficult to ascertain the exact differences between these national 'dress' styles that Mr. Toure spoke of. However it was obvious that what was being referred to were pastoral Fulani styles of dress. These were considered to be more 'traditional' and distinguishable than the various outfits worn by non-pastoral, and urban dwelling Fulani. While differences do exist between various styles these differences are not all coterminous with international boundaries. Some similarities must exist between these different styles for them to be recognized by Fulani and non-Fulani alike as distinctly 'Fulani'.

The chosen outfit was a pastoral Fulani costume from Nigeria. The young women had their hair intricately plaited, and were carrying calabashes of fresh milk on their heads. The young men were carrying their staffs and were dressed as herdsmen. The banner they held aloft read: **'SOUDOU BABA, GREAT FULANI ASSOCIATION.'**

All cultural performances rely on symbols. Symbols, recognizable (by Fulani and non-Fulani alike in the Greater Accra context) as Fulani cultural symbols (cows, milk, costume etc.) were employed in the parade. These communicated both visually and emotionally with the audience as well as the

actors. However, as Turner (1988: 24) notes, cultural performances are far more than mere reflectors and expressions of a culture. The performances in and of themselves can be, 'active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting "designs for living".'

### **Politics, dominance & legitimization**

Celebration is both culture and politics, or, better perhaps, cultural politics.

(Manning 1983: 16)

This street parade was organized, and in a sense 'controlled', by the Great Fulani Association and its Youth Wing. It is evident that second and third generation Fulani, particularly those who are members of the Great Fulani Association, have a different 'political' agenda in discussing Fulani identity than do those who originate from the various countries themselves, and who are members of other associations.

These 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani have, as part of their agenda, an obligation to stress and legitimize their presence in Ghana. One example of the way in which they have recently attempted to consciously legitimize their position, has been the recent change in name of the association from the Fulani Association of Ghana, to the Great Fulani Association, its Ghanaian character taken for granted (as discussed in the previous chapter). (See Chapter Six, *suudu-baaba*.)

Not only has the agenda of the 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani to be taken into account in order to understand the parade so also has the fact that the leaders of this association exercise a degree of control over their members. These leaders, Mr. Toure and Abdulrahman in particular, not only command respect and authority due to their position as chairman and vice-chairman of the association,

but by the fact that they are literate and educated, in the formal Ghanaian state sense. As Manning noted, 'When those who control celebration are also those who dominate the social order, there is a tendency to ritualize that dominance in order to sustain and legitimize it' (1983: 7).

I would argue that the question of 'celebratory control' is an important one. For despite being 'ambiguous and negotiable...dynamic celebrations are symbolic (but important, and quite 'real') battlefields for waging competitive struggles for power, prestige and material objectives' (Manning 1983: 7). In 'controlling' the celebration, and having full reign over the way in which Fulani were publicly presented, the Great Fulani Association chose to emphasize: the local presence of the Fulani in Accra; their legitimate presence in Ghana and their (supposed) 'unity' within Ghana. They also celebrated their common features and solidarity in the sub-region (through the use of symbolic markers), as well as their diversity. As Little noted, 'Social solidarity is further enhanced by emblems, mottoes and banners' (Little 1965: 88).

Contrast the public celebration of 'Fulaniness', as portrayed in the Street Parade by the Great Fulani Association, with the following episode,

### ***'Wayward' Wodaabe women***

On two occasions, while in Accra, I came across young Wodaabe women from Niger walking along the streets with their babies on their backs. They were selling traditional medicines. I stopped to greet them and they tried to sell me some of their remedies. I declined to buy any but asked if I could take their photographs. They agreed, and I was obliged to pay them some money for the privilege.

They were immediately recognizable as Wodaabe because of their distinctive hairstyle, their multiple rows of earrings, their dress and facial tattoos. (See photograph.)

*Wodaabe women in Accra*



When I animatedly discussed the presence of these women in Accra with various other Fulani (non-Wodaabe men and women, young and old from a variety of different national origins), the general view of them was unfavourable. The way they dressed was ridiculed. Their wrappers (cloth wrapped around their waists) were said to be too short. They were labelled lax Muslims. The medicines they were selling were said to be false ones, and they were accused of bewitching and cursing people. I was advised to avoid them and warned not to accept anything they may give me and ignore any advice they might offer.

The reaction of other Fulani men and women to the Wodaabe women was interestingly ambiguous or ambivalent. On the one hand they are thought of as 'real' 'pure' Fulani (the custodians of the 'original' Fulani culture) and the most pastoral of all Fulani groups. On the other, they were being rejected and maligned as dirty sellers of false medicines and bad Muslims - as witnessed by their improper sense of dress. The irony here was that in many ways the dress, hair and general demeanour of the women from the Sallah Day Street procession was an attempt to emulate the Wodaabe, to look like them and to celebrate them as 'real' and 'original' Fulani.

### **Showing solidarity through 'sameness'**

Dress is often used as a means of distinguishing and defining individual Fulani: in obvious, though ambiguous ways, pastoral dress identifying both the Street Procession and the Wodaabe women. Dress also operates more subtly. At wedding ceremonies the bride's family chooses a particular cloth (wax print - often with its own name and 'personality'). The bride's female friends and relatives buy the same type of cloth and have it sewn up, by a local seamstress, into any fashionable style they desire. On the day of the wedding all the ladies wear their outfits, made from the same patterned cloth. These outfits are easily

distinguishable from the rest of the wedding guests and clearly indicate the individuals who are there to show support for the bride. Conversely, *not* wearing the cloth can be interpreted as an indication that one does not support the bride or the marriage. This is a common practice among other ethnic groups in Ghana and the cloths chosen are often 'Ghanaian' with Akan names. The wearing of this cloth engenders a sense of unity, togetherness and support. For years after the event, the wedding guests can choose to wear the cloth on other occasions. It is always associated with that particular wedding and with that particular bride.

### *Co-ordinated cloths*

At Safiatu's wedding, her family and her husband's family were split into two camps concerning the marriage, namely those who supported it and those who were opposed. Safiatu's mother-in-law was intensely opposed to the marriage of Safiatu to her eldest son, as were some of her sisters-in-law (her husband's half and full female siblings).

On the day of the wedding those who were against it had the opportunity to display their aversion to the marriage by *not* wearing the cloth chosen for the wedding. Their objection to the marriage was clearly visible.



*Spot the Anthropologist at a wedding!*



## Passing as Fulani

If your mother is Fulani, and your father is [a] different type, we like you because you are a brother to us, because of the breast [the idea that your identity as a Fulani is passed on to you through your mother's milk].

This definition of who is and who is not Fulani, as expressed by Mr. Toure, is highly ambiguous. He begins by stating that having one Fulani parent is a sufficient criterion for inclusion, but later casts his net wider to include Yorubas and Kotokolis. The following case is of a woman who was presented to me, (by her husband, her neighbours and herself) as Fulani, but whose physical appearance and demeanour seemed to suggest otherwise.

### *The case of Maamata Bubakar*

I had seen Maamata on two previous visits to Asutsuare Junction and had immediately presumed that she was not Fulani. She certainly didn't 'look' Fulani.<sup>167</sup> Her hair was the 'wrong' texture. She was very dark skinned and had prominent cicatrization marks on her face. All indications from her outward appearance seemed to point to the fact that she was *not* Fulani.

On my third visit to her community and on the day that I interviewed her, I discovered that she was the wife of Baani. I had first met Baani a few weeks prior to my meeting with Maamata. Baani had told me that his wife was called Hadiza, she was Fulani and that her clan name was Barry.

When I came to interviewing her, she gave me a different name to the one that Baani had given her. When I asked of her clan name (which most individuals readily identify) something interesting happened. First of all she was silent and then giggled a little. The other women sitting around her came to her rescue and offered various clan names, including Borgou. She seized upon Borgou and told me that I should write it down that her clan name is Borgou! I knew that Borgou was not a Fulani clan name. It is a province in Benin.

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<sup>167</sup> Having spent months among people who are highly conscious of, and vocal about, their phenotypical differences vis-à-vis, local Ghanaians, I began to 'see' these distinctions myself!



In July, a month after the interview I mentioned Baani's wife to my friend, and research assistant, she said to me, 'Oh! the Kotokoli woman'.

Maamata was trying to 'pass' as Fulani, at least to me, the anthropologist. Her husband, and the immediate community in which she resided, had created a Fulani identity for her. Ironically, for a people usually concerned with their physical distinctiveness, in supporting Maamata's claim to be Fulani, they were embracing a woman whose 'look' was the antithesis of their ideal. It was ironic that Maamata and her husband felt that she could pass as a Fulani to a non-Fulani (me, the anthropologist). This almost obsessive fascination with physical appearance is further illustrated in the following discussion on skin bleaching.

### **Coke & fanta**

Skin bleaching is a prevalent practice among women, young and old, in Accra. In the eyes of these women, a smooth and 'fair' complexion is equated with beauty. In Ghana, skin bleaching is popularly known as 'Coke and Fanta' (after the soda drinks - Coca Cola and Fanta Orange). Patches of skin which have been successfully bleached turn an 'orange' colour (hence Fanta). Some patches of skin however remain black (Coke), - particularly areas of skin which are scarred, as well as joints - such as around the knuckles, knees and elbows.

To the Fulani in particular, skin colour is an important part of their self-identification, as well as an obvious way in which non-Fulani view them as distinctly different. In general, the Fulani have a strong sense of themselves as a 'fair' (red) and concomitantly beautiful people (see Chapter Two). Having assumed that many Fulani girls and women were fair-skinned simply because they were Fulani (which is what they wanted me and others to believe) it came as a surprise to discover that skin bleaching was a relatively common practice. Some

of the 'fair' women I knew, who prided themselves on being 'light' skinned, in fact used bleach on their skin.

There was an interestingly ambiguous response to bleaching skin among the Fulani women in Accra. On the one hand many women publicly denounce it as an outmoded and dangerous practice, while on the other hand privately many have bleached their skin now and in the past. It would appear to be something that most women who engage in it, do in private. They very rarely admit to bleaching in public. Knowledge of who uses bleach appears to be a potential weapon for revenge, as the following incident illustrates:

### *Safiatu's Revenge*

The practice of skin bleaching first came to my attention when Safiatu informed me that her mother-in-law regularly bleached her skin. Safiatu's mother-in-law is noticeably 'fair-skinned' and I had presumed that this was natural. Safiatu and her mother-in-law have a very strained and tense relationship; they are civil to each other in public but privately criticise each other. Safiatu bears a grudge against her mother-in-law for not accepting her into the family and for openly disapproving of Safiatu's marriage (see Co-ordinated Cloths). Safiatu vented her frustration and the grudge she bore against her mother-in-law by revealing this usually confidential and personal information.

In Safiatu's mother-in-law's case, her siblings were noticeably and consistently 'darker-skinned' than she was - further evidence of her bleaching. No cases of men bleaching their skin were ever encountered, which could lead one to hypothesise that Fulani women are consistently 'lighter' than their men are. I did not however systematically study skin colour and could therefore not state with any conviction that the women were obviously and systematically 'lighter-skinned' than the men. I did note the many remarks made by Fulani and non-Fulani alike to the effect that Fulani are 'lighter' than other peoples. In reality however there are of course many 'light' as well as many 'dark'-skinned Fulani in Greater Accra, both men and women. Darker skin was also often read as 'slave origin'.

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In my own case (see the photograph entitled 'Spot the Anthropologist') it was often remarked upon that I looked Fulani, because, among other things, of my relatively 'light' skin. However, comments from certain female individuals about how I looked 'darker' or 'lighter', on a given occasion, invariably reflected their mood or their feelings about me on that day.

## **Rhetoric & reality**

There would appear to be a significant gap in some cases between the rhetoric used to describe the Fulani situation in Accra and the observable reality. A variety of dominant symbols (cows, cowherds and milkmaids, calabashes full of milk etc.), arguably representing a broad spectrum of Fulani 'cultural data', were used during the Parade, to unify and 'reinforce a broad field of conceptual and emotional significance' (Manning 1983: 27).

Despite a common claim to knowledge of cattle work, due to their common heritage as Fulani, the reality is somewhat different. The majority of the members of The Great Fulani Association have never herded or even lived in a cattle raising environment, however they used the cow as a sort of unifying emblem, easily recognizable as distinctly Fulani, providing a symbol of solidarity, despite their differences.

The contradictions between rhetoric and reality work not only in relation to symbols used to identify Fulani but also during the meetings of the *suudu-baaba* associations. Debates over language use, particularly during the meetings of various of the *suudu-baaba* organizations, provide another major example of the divergence between words and actions.

## Language

In Afeynia, and later in Odumse, there has been a recent movement to establish a Fulani school to teach spoken and written Fulfulde as well as to teach the Koran. A single remarkable individual has spearheaded this movement. This man is Hamidu Dem from Senegal. We first met Hamidu in Chapter Five. Hamidu's life's ambition is to develop and teach the Fulani language and culture throughout West Africa, to teach the Fulani about themselves and about each other. He is particularly concerned that Fulani in Ghana should preserve their language and customs and know their history. This is part of his story and in particular his indefatigable attempts to teach the Fulani in Greater Accra their language and history. He attends a *suudu-baaba* in Kasoa every Friday but claimed that it was 'very weak'.

### *Hamidu's several suudu-baabas.*

In September 1995 Hamidu Dem established a *suudu-baaba* in Afeynia. He rallied those around him to come together and establish an association. The association was called *Kawrital Pinal e bambaare Suudu-Baaba Fulbe*. (They had a membership card on which was printed a drawing of a cow.) Hamidu taught Fulfulde for four months to those who chose to attend. However, there were difficulties over money and after seven months the association collapsed.

In February 1996 Hamidu set up an evening school in Afeynia and would make the journey from Odumse to Afeynia to teach the local Fulani. He also travelled to Ochibleku in February 1996 to teach the local Fulani there too. This venture did not last long and he abandoned his long trips to Ochibleku to teach. He later moved to set up permanent residence in Odumse, and some of the local children from Ochibleku come to his school as well as those from Odumse who are willing. He has built a thatched structure in front of his house where he teaches.

In an attempt to try and revive the teaching of Fulfulde to the urban, born in Ghana, Fulani, Hamidu Dem came to address the meeting to educate those present about their history and to arrange a regular meeting time to return to teach Fulfulde.

[Signed]

***Fulfulde: Rhetoric & reality***

On 15 March 1997, Hamidu Dem came for the first time to address the Great Fulani Association in Nima. He was extremely enthusiastic and felt that he had found the perfect arena in which to carry out his work, teaching Fulfulde and Fulani culture. He was introduced to the assembled meeting (in Hausa) as follows:

'I think that you can see that we have a visitor, a Fulani from Senegal. He wishes that all Fulani were united. This is his work. He is against the disappearance of Fulfulde. There are some people whose mothers and fathers are Fulani, but when you say hello to them in Fulfulde, they can't respond.'

Hamidu Dem started his address to the meeting by recounting a version of the Fulani myth of origin. He spoke no Hausa and the majority of the members of the meeting little or no Fulfulde, as a result, everything that Hamidu said had to be translated little by little into Hausa. The young women among whom I was sitting grew very restless they began whispering loudly and shuffling in their seats, they were obviously bored and definitely were not listening to their guest.

When Hamidu had finished talking he was thanked and informed that the Great Fulani Association had a few problems that they were still sorting out so he shouldn't bother to come all the way to Nima from Odumse, he should rather stay at home and when *suudu-baaba* were ready to set up a language school, they would call him to come and teach.

This attempt at teaching Fulfulde never got off the ground. There appeared to be much rhetoric about the importance of speaking Fulfulde, but when it came down to it, there was very little enthusiasm among the members to take the time and the trouble to learn. Despite their lack of enthusiasm, the need to teach and preserve the Fulani language, among Ghanaian born Fulani in particular, was given as an important factor in the decision to found the Great Fulani Association. Speaking Hausa, as opposed to Fulfulde, is a very real example of how as Mr. Toure said, people could 'get lost'. The official line, from him, was that:

When we go to the meetings we start them at 9.30. At 9 o'clock those of us who don't understand Fulani [Fulfulde] we have teachers who

come in the morning to teach us from 9 to 9.30, before we start the meeting.

The picture that he painted in the above quotation however was an idealized one. Upon attending the *suudu-baaba* regularly there was no evidence of a Fulfulde class. There had apparently been a teacher, who had taught for just four months, but had given up teaching because the pupils were usually not very punctual and he, being a young man, had found it difficult to teach older people.

What follows is a typical example of the kinds of conversations held during some of the *suudu-baaba* meetings. These excerpts are taken from a Great Fulani Association meeting that took place on the morning of 5 April 1997. Hamidu Dem was again present. He was persistent in his attempts to try to teach Fulfulde to these/ 'made-in-Ghana' Fulani. The meeting was opened with prayers, and then the following conversation ensued in Hausa:

### *Case study of a suudu-baaba meeting*

Mamane:

'There are some people who haven't come [today] that is because they are occupied. We will ask them why!'

Hamidu Hama:

'We should try to do everything [possible] to arrange our meetings.'

Fati Bukari:

'The others, who aren't present at the meeting, they should explain to us why they have been absent for two weeks!'

After discussing the notable lack of members that morning and what they should/so about it, the conversation shifted to the subject of Fulfulde:

Mamane:

'Why is it that in our meetings we don't speak Fulfulde! It is because the majority don't speak or understand Fulfulde!'

Agomada:

'We should be speaking in Fulfulde in our meetings! because when a Fulani comes from the bush [to attend our meetings], he doesn't come again because he says that we don't speak Fulfulde.

Oumarou Barry Sanda:

'When we started our meetings we said that there were some individuals who didn't speak Fulfulde and some also who don't understand Hausa, its only that the majority speak Hausa...'

Agomada wanted the conversation to revert to the topic of money and she interrupted with:

'What has brought problems is that we have spent all the money in the kitty! That is why so many people haven't shown up today...We have to be kept aware of what is going on. If they (executive) have spent the money we have to be told! We are Muslims, we can forgive?'

Bello Sanda:

'We have spoken of the affair that Agomada is talking about, we even decided/proposed to forget the money affair and start over again, a new kitty. But we decided that we shouldn't forget the whole thing. Those who have spent the money must pay.'

Hajia Safiya:

'I spoke with Alhaji Hama, they have signed some papers in order to go to the bank and get the rest of the money out and open a new account...'

Agomada:

'We must give the women all the documents [needed in order to] take the money to the bank!'

Hajia Safiya:

'No matter where there are meetings and one or two [individuals] spend the money, it's that that stops the meetings from moving forward. Now it is up to the treasury to come and explain to us all publicly...In two or three weeks they will get the money out to allow *suudu-baaba* to move forward correctly...'

Mamane:

'Now we know what is going on. It is about the money having been spent by three people...'

Adama Diallo: (see Chapter Six)

'We are very happy that Agomada has told us to speak in Fulfulde, In our meetings in Doori [Burkina Faso] there was a Fulfulde school. You could write a letter to send to Mali, Burkina, Niger [and there] you could find someone who could read the letter. It was the Fulani who founded Nima, but now it is Hausa which prevails. In Nima there is no Fulani quarter. Here is a teacher who teaches Fulfulde [pointing to Hamidu Dem], it is not a matter of money!'

Mamane:

'The teacher [Hamidu] has been coming for two weeks and we have done nothing. Now he should stay at home and when we solve our money problem we will call him. When the people who have spent the money aren't here next week we will decide upon another solution.'

This particular meeting was similar in content and structure to many of the other meetings of the Great Fulani Association. The entire meeting was taken up with discussing pressing issues. These issues speak to the very heart of some of the tensions faced in attempts to 'unify', or even <sup>to discuss</sup> discussion on Fulani unity.

The first problem encountered was that the executive hadn't shown up to the meeting. The reasons for this was that they were rumoured to have spent most of the money in the Association's kitty on the Ramadan Street processions. It was ironic that this public attempt at displaying and celebrating the pride of the Fulani in Accra had rather angered many of those it claimed to represent. Many of the members of the Great Fulani Association, while enjoying the street parade (at the time), were later filled with disgust at the way in which 'their' money (their weekly contributions to the Association's funds) had been squandered.

The other major issue, often the cause of heated debate was the issue of language use, namely, the fact that the meetings were taking place in Hausa and not in Fulfulde. The discussion over the use of Fulfulde and Hausa brought to the fore a major distinction between 'types' of Fulani and directly addresses the reasons this association had been established in the first place. The debate also encapsulated and represented the very reason why, ultimately, it could not achieve its aim of 'unifying all Fulani'. This debate over the use of Hausa and Fulfulde, by extension leads to discussions of 'town' and 'bush'.



We should be speaking in Fulfulde in our meetings!...because when a Fulani comes from the bush [to attend our meetings], he doesn't come again because he says that we don't speak Fulfulde.

(Agomada)

The dichotomous relationship between town and bush, urban and rural, Hausa and Fulfulde, can be seen to be speaking to another set of 'identity' related issues. The dichotomy encapsulates the differences between urban and rural; Town Fulani and Cattle Fulani; and 'real', 'authentic' Fulani and (as one lady, Oumou, residing on the peri-urban fringe) put it to me, 'Fulani fifty-fifty'. By "Fulani fifty-fifty" Oumou was implying that those Fulani, like herself, who had been born in Ghana and lived on the peri-urban fringe, were only 'half' Fulani, as opposed to one hundred percent Fulani. She was acknowledging that, for example, while she could communicate in Fulfulde, her Fulfulde was by no means 'perfect' as her father's (a settled immigrant from Niger) had been. Although she knew about *pulaaku*, her behaviour and conduct did not always reflect it. She, and many others, considered the 'Fulani one hundred percent', to be those residing in the rural areas, tending cattle, speaking fluent Fulfulde.

*Spoken*

## Tensions in traditions

We have to call our traditional band [of musicians], we don't like spinners [DJ's playing pop music]. Every time we do something, we do it according to custom, so that we don't get left behind.

An incident, that took place at a wedding, shed light on the tensions that exist between those members of *suudu-baaba* who want to preserve a sense of Fulani culture and identity in Accra, and those for whom the preservation of Fulani culture is not a priority.

### *The case of Mariama's musical mix*

On the 16 March 1997 Mariama Diallo got married. Mariama is the granddaughter of Alhaji Diallo of New Madina and the wedding celebrations took place in Diallo's compound. A band of Fulani musicians was present. They set up a tent-like covering, for shade, at one extreme of the compound and started playing. There was a singer, a calabash player and a guitarist. They had no microphones, but were audible throughout the compound. A few of the guests gathered around them. Some of the unmarried young girls, members of the Great Fulani Association, got up to dance to the music, to show their appreciation to the musicians, as well as to get the attention of the few people gathered around. The onlookers showed their appreciation for the music and the dancing by dropping cedi coins and notes on the heads of the dancers. The money was gathered together and went towards paying the musicians.

At the other end of the compound, the spinners (DJ's playing mainly imported African-American popular music, rap, dance and R & B tunes) were setting themselves up to perform. They plugged in their gigantic amplifiers and put the finishing touches to the erection of the marquee that they had brought with them. When they started to play the records that they had brought along, the majority of the young, unmarried guests and family members congregated around the marquee to enjoy the show. The brave ones among the young girls started to dance, urged on by their friends. They danced contemporary dance moves, similar to those that would be performed in many a bar and night-club in Accra and indeed all over the world. The sound of the traditional musicians was not only drowned out but they also lost part of their already modestly sized audience to the seemingly more popular 'spinners'.

An irate member of the Great Fulani Association/Youth Wing vented his frustration at the situation to me, complaining that the family of the bride had not even come over to the traditional musicians in order to listen to the music. He said that the *suudu-baaba* was doing its best to teach the youth their traditional music but that no one was paying attention. He felt slighted and insulted and said that pop music should not even be allowed on such occasions.

What I witnessed that afternoon was a cultural contest, a battle of 'new' versus 'old', 'tradition' versus 'modernity'. What was being contested were the values and customs that the *suudu-baaba* was attempting to preserve, versus the reality of the Ghanaian setting where this was taking place. Tradition started its performance earlier in the day but strove in vain to be heard over the louder more popular vibes of the modern 'spinners'. The modern took up much more space

and provided an arena for the girls to dance flirtatiously and the young men to admire them.

Some of the Fulani youth present, but none of the older married guests, showed where their allegiances lay. They illustrated all too plainly, in choosing to dance and perform where the 'spinners' were, that they preferred this environment. The Great Fulani Association had tried to put its philosophy of preserving customs - and teaching the Youth their own 'traditions' - into practice, but were ignored by the majority and drowned out by the louder 'spinners'. For all the rhetoric of unity, the allegiances that individuals held were most obviously illustrated in their action, in real situations, such as this.

The notion that the way that things should 'really' be done somehow gets changed and transformed when brought to Ghana was a common theme. It was a popular topic of discussion and debate. For example Adama Diallo (in the case study of a *suudu-baaba* meeting) compared the efficiency of the *suudu-baabas* in Ghana with Burkina. Note also how Oumou implied that Fulani 'made-in-Ghana', like herself, are somehow diluted, 'fifty-fifty'. There are countless case studies and claims that the Ghanaian experience is somehow 'diluting' Fulani traditions and cultural 'norms'. We return to Safiatu (see 'Wedding cloths: Showing solidarity through "sameness"' and 'Safiatu's Revenge').

### *The betrayed bride*

Safiatu felt betrayed on her wedding night! She was a virgin when she married Saedu and had purposely kept herself 'pure' for her future husband. As she pointed out, it is all too easy these days to lose one's virginity before marriage and the pressure from peers is often great to do so. She knew that some of her female friends in Niger would not be found to be virgins on their wedding nights!

According to Safiatu, in Niger when a girl is found to have been a virgin on her wedding night, it is a great source of pride and celebration and brings great honour to her mother and father. It is a cause for a public celebration and the groom bestows gifts upon his new bride as praise.

Saedu gave no such gifts to Safiatu. He didn't publicly acknowledge her virginity. She felt betrayed and very hurt and asked him why he had not given her anything. Saedu told Safiatu that this was because he had no money. Safiatu pointed out to me that Saedu had plenty of cattle. He could easily have given her one as a present! Had her husband given her a cow, Safiatu said that she would have had a photograph taken of herself with the cow and sent a copy to her mother in Niger.

Safiatu said that this was the kind of issue that in later years could cause problems in their marriage and lead to divorce!

Safiatu was born and raised in Niamey, Niger. At the age of seventeen she was brought to Ghana ostensibly to visit her mother's sister. Within months of coming to Ghana, she was married off to her mother's sister's co-wife's son in New Madina (see 'Of how a visit became a stay' in Chapter Four). Till this day she has never returned to Niger. She felt betrayed that there was no public acknowledgement of her virginity.

Safiatu's husband Saedu was born in Ghana and has lived most of his life in New Madina. His late father came from Niger to Ghana some fifty years ago. One explanation Safiatu debated was whether this important Fulani custom had somehow got 'lost' in Ghana. Another example of how so-called 'traditions' get changed in the Ghanaian context is provided in the following example of the enturbaning of a new chief

Various chiefs represent and head the Fulani community in Accra.<sup>168</sup> These include both unofficial chiefs, respected older men in the community representing their country people, and official, state-registered representatives. In this group of 'official' chiefs, there is a Sarkin Fulani of Madina and a Sarkin Fulani of Ashaiman.<sup>169</sup> It is to the Chief of Ashaiman that attention will now turn.

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<sup>168</sup> The first Fulani Chief, or 'Headman', as they were called was officially recognized in Accra in 1926 (Pellow 1985: 434).

<sup>169</sup> *Sarkin* is Hausa for Chief. Note that the Hausa word is most commonly used, and not the Fulfulde terms, *Ardo*, *Laamiido*.

On 15 June 1997, a new Fulani chief of Ashaiman was enturbaned along with his new deputy. The former Chief had died some four months previously. The new chief, Oumarou Arba, was a well known and respected member of the Fulani community in Ashaiman. He was of the Toroodo (Tal) clan from Niger. An iron trader by profession, he had become relatively wealthy over time. He was reputed to be of 'good character' and was known to be a hard-working man who was hospitable to visitors, especially his countrymen, visiting from Niger.

The preparations for this grand event (his enturbaning) had started months previously. Four meetings had taken place prior to the enturbaning. The official and unofficial debates and ceremonies surrounding the enturbaning of the new chief, following the death of the previous one, revealed a multitude of tensions and issues pertaining to the ambiguous and malleable concept of 'tradition'. According to Barnes,

The ceremonies associated with contemporary chieftaincy are cultural performances with broad political and economic agendas...They constitute a vital arena for the expression and transmission of symbolic capital as well as a crucial forum where grass roots opinion can be heard and accommodated.

(Barnes 1996: 20)

### *Ashaiman's new chief; Organizing an enturbaning*

After the death of the previous chief, the male elders of Ashaiman congregated in his house and from among them, two men came forward who wanted to be considered for the position of new chief. A date was set and a second meeting was held (also at the house of the old chief) in which members of the Fulani community from as far afield as Ho and Winneba, were invited to come and choose which of the two men they wanted as their new representative. In turn, each of the two men was pointed to, and those wishing to vote for him raised their hands. Those present voted for Oumarou Arba.

A third meeting took place on 10 May 1997.<sup>170</sup> There were over eighty people present by the end of the meeting. The majority were men, there were eight or so women, (sitting at the edge of the gathering). This meeting was labelled an outdoorings.<sup>171</sup> On this day, the date of the enturbaning ceremony was set (for the 15 June). Details of organization for the event were also discussed.

Someone in the audience suggested that the discussions should be taking place in Hausa as well as Fulfulde. The Sarkin Madina spoke up to say that he disagreed, all discussions should take place in Fulfulde and Fulfulde only!

The next decision that was debated was what should be contributed towards the celebration, and how much. There was much disagreement and discussion. Some were of the opinion that an amount should be fixed that every individual should pay. Others said no, everyone should pay according to their means.

Finally a member of the executive turned to me and asked me to write down the following names. It was decided that in each place where Fulani dwelled, the people there should club together to make a joint contribution. People started shouting out the names of the places where 'Fulani live'. There were forty-five names in total. They ranged from areas of central Accra to small rural areas in other regions.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> I had not been informed of the other meetings which took place and had therefore not been in attendance. At this meeting however I was shown the 'official' letter of invitation, which had been delivered to the house of Alhaji Diallo, the previous day. It read as follows:

Fulani Community  
Ashiaman  
30<sup>th</sup> April, 1997

Dear Sir

INVITATION

We have the pleasure to invite you to the OUTDOORING of our NEW FULANI CHIEF which is scheduled to take place on SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1997

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Venue: Government School Grounds - Ashiaman

Your presence is essential

Yours sincerely  
AG: FULANI CHIEF ASHAIMAN

<sup>171</sup> In Ghanaian communities it is common on the seventh day after birth, for babies to be 'outdoored', brought out for the first time in public with their mothers to be named and publicly acknowledged. The same word 'outdoorings' was used for the Chief. In this context it also meant that the new Chief was to be acknowledged and viewed by the general public.

<sup>172</sup> THE LIST OF PLACES MENTIONED:

In addition, the names of well-known Fulani individuals and their households were called out (whether that individual was present or not) and they were assigned an item to bring, cows in some instances.

As soon as it was made official that Oumarou Arba was to become the new chief, rumours abounded, in many quarters, that he was of slave origin, he was a *Maccudo*. Some said that they knew this from his ancestry, others said that it was obvious from his dark skin colouring and demeanour. Most people however, even those who acknowledged his slave origins, believed that he would make a good chief; others saw his ancestry as being an insurmountable obstacle to his enturbaning.

An important and pervasive distinction in Fulani society is that between free born (nobles) and individuals of slave, *maccube*, origin. The differences between nobles and slaves are said to be 'obvious' on the basis of a variety of criteria (skin colour, demeanour, occupation and intelligence). The choice of a *maccudo* as Chief of the Fulani of Ashaiman appeared therefore ironic, considering the many pejorative things spoken of them by freeborn Fulani in the Ghanaian context. It would appear that a good character and financial means are more important markers of status and ability than is being of noble blood.

The other 'difference' in how things were conducted in Accra, in contrast to 'back home', was the manner in which the new chief was appointed. He was elected rather than chosen on the basis of hereditary succession. The new Chief was therefore chosen on the basis of his own personal appeal, wealth and character. I was informed that, 'at home' (used to refer to the various countries of origin from where the Fulani have come to Ghana) when a Chief dies, 'you pick someone from his family' (Shansudiin).

The discussion, or rather name calling, regarding where the main populations of Fulani reside, and who should be invited to the ceremony, was

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Afienya, Odumse, Ochibleku, Apollonia, Asabi, Doryum, Tachikope, Chipoli, Asutsuare Junction, Kasenya, Ayibom, Kongo, Akuse, Tokpo, Ho, Bawakope, Adakrom, Yuuma, New Madina, Somanya, Agoto, Darkope, Kasoa, Osuwe, Ashongman, Madina, Sogakope, Dawa, Akatsi, Juapong, Kute, Bachiri, Mataheko, Dawhenya, Tchokpoli, Dabala, Winneba, Avedo, Tavikpo, Abolo, Sikirikamp, Ashaiman, Lassibi, Nima,

interesting. Anyone who wanted to mention a place name could do so. The names of all Fulani areas of settlement, known to those present, and within Ashaiman's sphere of influence had been mentioned - all the residences in Southern Ghana, within reasonable distance of where the ceremony was to take place in Ashaiman.

### Concluding remarks

As we have seen from the performances discussed here - instances in which Fulani ethnicity is invoked, whether overtly or covertly - there are liable to be strong, often polarized and essentialized, interpretations and opinions. The complexities of the contemporary (Greater Accra) context and Fulani community, create a situation where opinion is divided as to what criteria are in some sense 'traditional' to the Fulani on the one hand and what are 'modern' and created in Ghana, as 'new' and/or distorted or invented traditions on the other.

The conflicts and contradictions within the social dramas examined are directly related to traits generally considered characteristic of the Fulani, not shared by other Ghanaian or other West African ethnicities. In Chapter Two (see 'Who are the Fulani?: Contested criteria') we discussed the importance placed upon these traits (phenotypical features, rural/pastoral populations versus urbanized/non-pastoral, Fulfulde, *pulaaku*) as 'core' markers of Fulani ethnic identity.

In this chapter these characteristics are noted to be the basis of debates on Fulani identity in Greater Accra today. In the case of phenotypical features, they include skin lightening and the tendency to 'read' 'slavery' off skin colour. With regard to comportment and demeanour more generally, within the Fulani ethnic category, they included the sharp antithesis between the self-presentation of the Wodaabe-type Fulani and that of the restrained, robed, markedly Muslim Fulani.



With regard to language, they included the recognition of Fulfulde as an important marker of *pulaaku*, and a belief that some of its best speakers (Wodaabe) are poor examples of correct Fulani comportment.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### ***‘We have no home like Ghana...’***

Throughout this thesis we have considered issues of mobility, survival and identity in relation to contemporary Fulani experience in Greater Accra, Ghana. The construction sites (locations), as well as events and processes, through which we have explored these issues have been ethnic associations, public gatherings and common rites of passage, genealogical reckoning of kinship and marriage, and the ways in which ties of descent and filiation are used to enhance individual and family solidarity and survival.

The first chapter considered the extent to which the Fulani in Greater Accra, originating from all over the sub-region and scattered as they are, can be considered a group, able to take action and persisting over time, as opposed to a category, with particular identifiable features. This chapter returns to the ‘we’ of the title, to consider issues of individualism and community. Despite the multitude of ‘differences’ relating to national, economic, occupational, stratificational, residential, linguistic and other experiences, the ethnic label ‘Fulani’ in the context of Greater Accra is meaningful, both privately and publicly.

Riesman’s (1984: 180) notion that, ‘A Fulani has no feeling for the Fulani as an ethnic group’ is extremely contentious and debatable in the Greater Accra context, as is his provocative statement (which we first encountered in Chapter One), ‘For the Fulani the community as a living entity in its own right does not exist; what does exist is the bond of friendship or kinship that links one person to another’ (Riesman 1984: 179). For Cohen community is, ‘that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediate than the abstraction we call “society”’ (Cohen 1985: 15) On the one hand there are many people, particularly young migrant men, who travel and work alone and for whom bonds of friendship

with co-ethnics and others are of the utmost importance. On the other hand, as discussed, there are many events in which individuals come together to take action, as a people with common ethnic origins. With regard to Fulani, in the Republic of Benin, Lombard (1980: 185)<sup>173</sup> noted both the tendencies towards individualism on the one hand and community networks on the other, as did Dupire (1970: 85). 173

Arguing in support of Riesman's statement, we note that residentially proximate families do tend to assist one another, and bonds of friendship, over time, can turn into kinship and community through marriage alliances. The three large New Madina families are a case in point (see genealogy of New Madina alliances).<sup>174</sup> This would appear to be evident more in peri-urban and rural locations than in urban contexts, where multi-ethnic dwellings and a lack of Fulani residential proximity are the norm.

Against Riesman's statement however, it would be misleading to suggest that there is no sense of a larger community in Greater Accra. If there existed no 'feeling' of an ethnic group then all those people who came from far and wide to meet and greet their new chief in Ashaiman would not have felt any need to come. Surely also, there would be no concern for newly arrived strangers in Greater Accra of Fulani ethnic origin, but there is concern and conversely newcomers often seek out co-ethnics for support. *Suudu-baabas* are the most obvious example of this.

Islam clearly provides crosscutting institutional linkages with other groups, in education (koranic school) and daily prayers (mosques). In fact, some have gone so far as to suggest that, 'for Muslim migrants to Accra, the salience of

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<sup>173</sup> Lombard (1980: 185) viewed the institution of pre-inheritance as favouring the rights of the individual (men and women) and collective ritual, *sorro*, and age groups as promoting group solidarity.

<sup>174</sup> As I write this conclusion, I received a letter from Nadia Diallo, daughter of Alhaji Diallo, informing me that she is now married to Husein Tal and has moved across the road, to live with her in-laws. This is the latest of the Diallo-Tal alliances. Husein, Nadia's husband, has subsequently returned to live in Holland.

ethnicity is insubstantial, having been superseded by an Islamic-based sense of community and social order' (Pellow 1985: 419). This is an extreme view and while undoubtedly the sense of muslim brotherhood is strong, particularly in the *zongos*, ethnicity is still significant.

The institution of chieftaincy, and the very public way in which Fulani from all over Southern Ghana came together to elect, acknowledge and enturban their new chief, is a prime example of the persistence of the group over time and a recognition of this fact. There are also processes, such as education, in which ethnic group characteristics are often invoked as justification for behaviour (strong adherence to Islam, rejection of formal state education etc.)

Perhaps it is this concern for other Fulani, however 'different' that creates a sense of community, however it is 'imagined' (Anderson 1996). For example, despite the ambiguous response to the Wodaabe (discussed in Chapter Seven), on several occasions, different people recounted with pride, the story of how Hajia Aisha had taken in a Nigerien<sup>175</sup> Wodaabe woman, and her female travelling companions, in the last days of her pregnancy and helped her through a very difficult childbirth. Hajia and her family had supported the woman at her time of great need. The baby was stillborn and was buried in Hajia's yard.

Irwin (1981: 13-14), working as he did in the Liptako region of Burkina Faso, noted a feeling of closeness to those often geographically distant and unknown, 'In Liptako an indicator of the Fulbe sense of membership in a larger ethnic community transcending the political boundaries of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial times is their interest in the affairs and history of distant Fulbe groups' (Irwin 1981: 13-14).<sup>176</sup> In Greater Accra there is also concern among individual Fulani for other unknown Fulani.

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<sup>175</sup> Hajia's own parents are both from Niger.

<sup>176</sup> Irwin went on to note:

'None of the people I knew had ever been to Guinea-Conakry, but in 1976 rumours circulated that Fulbe were in trouble with Sekou Toure's government, which was

The situation of the Fulani in the south of the Republic of Benin is in some senses comparable to that of southern Ghana. In both West African coastal states, the Fulani are an 'ethnic minority' and 'forgotten from research' (Bierschenk 1997: 6). Their forms of political organization in southern urban areas would also appear to be analogous (Schneider 1997: 152). There exists a sense of solidarity with other 'northerners' vis-à-vis the 'local' southern populations. They share the Muslim religion in common and live in *zongos* in the urban areas.

In the town of Ouidah, as in Greater Accra, the Fulani arrive from the sudan and sahelian zones in a dispersed and individual fashion, at different times of the year.

J'ai rencontré à Ouidah des boys<sup>177</sup> venant de presque tous les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest. A la question de savoir quelle était la raison de leur migration, ils répondaient inmanquablement: <<chercher de l'argent>>.

(Schneider 1997: 146)<sup>178</sup>

They, the young unmarried male migrants at least, develop their own forms of political organization, based not upon family or lineage ties, but on the basis of their ethnic origin, their language, their religion, their place or origin and mode of production (Schneider 1997: 152). *Suudu-baaba* is the name given to the

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said to be actively persecuting them, and I heard discussion after worried discussion of where this might lead. The history of foreign Fulbe would seem to have no more immediate relevance to Liptako than the tribulations of the Fulbe Guinea-Conakry, but several times I heard my friends question Fulbe travellers passing through Dori on the history of the lands from which they came. Their Liptako audiences listened eagerly to the visitors' stocks of genealogies and anecdotes, and the strangers listened equally eagerly to what Liptako people recounted in return. Travellers are not Liptako's only source of traditions in other parts of the Fulbe world. Many Liptako traditionists know them too, and they can recite genealogies and recount narratives from the histories of Fulbe living elsewhere in Upper Volta as well as in Niger, Nigeria, and Mali' (Irwin 1981: 13-14).

<sup>177</sup> A boy is a young unmarried herder employed, not by the owner of the cattle, but by the Fulani responsible for the herd. This is the word used both in Ghana and in Benin, see Schneider (1997: 146).

<sup>178</sup> 'I met in Ouidah boys, from nearly all the countries in West Africa. In reply to the question, what was the reason for your migration, they invariably replied, "to look for money".' (my translation).

association of all the Fulani in Ouidah.<sup>179</sup> The similarities with the Ghanaian *suudu-baabas* we have encountered are evident.

In both contexts, Greater Accra and Ouidah, these associations have a greater psycho-social than political impact upon their members. The Ouidah association collapsed in mid-May 1987. Various reasons suggested for the collapse included the disinterest of the young herders in general Fulani affairs and their 'distance' from the principles of '*laawol fulfulde*' or *pulaaku*, the Fulani way (Schneider 1997: 159), as demonstrated by their consumption of alcohol, financial mismanagement and conflicts between the youth and the elders!

Schneider interprets the collapse of *suudu-baabas* in Ouidah as evidence of a sense of individualism, in the absence of a strong network of geographically close kin (Schneider 1997: 160). In short, the interests of the individuals had overtaken those of the collectivity. With the collapse of the *suudu-baaba*, more recently, another organization has sprung up, based not upon ethnic origins, but national ones. Here too, we see similarities with the BurkinaBe Unity Club in Nima, Accra (see Chapter Six).

Perhaps it is in the conflicts and tension between the youth and the elders that we get to the heart of issues concerning individualism and the community. Individuals go through age-related changes in their identities (social as well as biological) as they grow and mature. The youth, as many of the case studies we have explored show, often use mobility as a way of escaping undesirable situations and shaping their own destinies. However, looking back to our consideration of centripetal and centrifugal factors (see Chapter Four) we see that ultimately there are strong forces working to build alliances and networks among Fulani, arranged by the older generation.

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<sup>179</sup> 'Suivant le modèle des formes d'organisation de leurs communautés pastorales d'origine, les Peuls on élu un chef peul et se réunissent en conseil (*suudu baaba*)' (Schneider 1997:152). Following the forms of organization in their original pastoral communities, the Fulani elected a Fulani chief and came together to advise one another.

Fulani identities in Greater Accra are complex: diverse national origins, differences in age, class, residence, education, livelihood, legal status in Ghana etc. We all have multiple identities, and social identities in particular are 'subject to constant redefinition by their bearers and others' (Schlee 1989: pp.1 and 234). The contextual, situational and relational character of identities is generally accepted and at any given time, a selection is made from a repertoire of possibilities, depending on whether the intention is to mark off difference or stress common characteristics.

As noted in Chapters One, Six and Seven, most attempts at essentializing some kind of 'ideal' Fulani type (in terms of, phenotypical feature, language, *pulaaku*, cattle, Islam etc.) disintegrate into differences when closely scrutinized. This is in no way a purely Ghanaian trait. In other regions, while the specificity's of these Fulani characteristics vary, they also elude close scrutiny. For example Boesen (1997: 21-47) in relation to the Fulani of Borgou, northern Benin, notes that many traits considered as Fulani in some regions are common to other groups also. For example non-Fulani (the Gando) practice flagellation.<sup>180</sup> The majority of rural dwelling Gando, GanunkeeBe gure, speak exclusively in Fulfulde and some Gando raise livestock. However the attributes that could be considered '<<marquers ethniques>> des eleveurs peuls' in this particular context are the herder's staff and the calabash (Boesen 1997: 28-29). As Frantz (1993: 21) observes, 'It seems clear that "Fulbe" and "Fulbeness" vary with situation, by location, by period in time, and by the person who does the defining.'

In Greater Accra, concern with pan-West-African Fulani identity is something that urban-based, born-in-Ghana Fulani in particular struggle to essentialize and symbolize. In urban Accra, the opportunity to 'get lost' (in the sense of losing one's ethnic identity) is greater, particularly for Fulani born in Ghana, than it is for rural inhabitants. Individuals and families residing in rural areas are predominantly occupied in pastoralism and agriculture, whereas those

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<sup>180</sup> Called *goja* in northern Benin, known as *sorro* elsewhere.

living in urban areas are not. Peri-urban dwellers are experiencing the rapid development of the city of Accra and other urban centres in the region.

While there is continuity of the Fulani ethnic category, there is undoubtedly also change. As noted in Chapter Three, there is a sense in which peri-urban and urban Fulani, particularly those born-in-Ghana are becoming Hausaized (speaking Hausa rather than Fulfulde, loosing touch with the concept of *pulaaku*, incorporating Hausa songs into their wedding ceremonies etc.). As noted, Issa Diallo asserted that, 'In years to come, the people of New Madina will be just like the people of Nima.'

Dupire remarked a similar situation among Fulani residing among the Mossi in Burkina Faso. Some cattle-keeping Fulani, who look after the Mossi's cattle, have maintained their 'ethnic integrity'. In contrast, sedentary Fulani have become 'Mossisés', they engage in agricultural as well as looking after cattle, they have married Mossi women and speak 'More' (Dupire 1994: 265-66). L<sup>s</sup>

In Borgou, Benin, Guichard (1990: 17-45) describes a situation in which a small group of educated, town Fulani 'exploit the collective conscience' of bush Fulani by codifying and 'ethnicizing' the ethnic identity of the Fulani, through the creation of a cultural association called 'Comité Fulfulde. The aims of this were to promote literacy, study the diverse dialects of Fulfulde, re-valorise Fulani culture, promote "modernist" tendencies (health, hygiene, animal husbandry) and to collaborate with existing administrative services' (Guichard 1990: 26).

In Bierschenk's words (1992: 509) Guichard is assuming that, 'clever politicians can simply "produce" a desired form of ethnic identity and force it on a particular group'. Guichard presupposes a clear-cut dichotomy between 'town' and 'bush' Fulani, in an aggressor/victim relationship. While clearly some Fulani do live in the 'bush' and some in the 'town' (and some in-between) the distinction 7

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that Guichard makes in Benin is untenable and too simplistic in the Ghanaian, more specifically Greater Accra, context.

Bierschenk views the situation as more complex also. According to Bierschenk (1995: 457), for ethnic groups, like all 'we-groups', the reality of the 'experience of community' results primarily from the rapport within the shared symbolic domain. All communities are in this sense 'imaginary' (Anderson 1996). He takes as his example, the case of a seminar which took place in northern Benin, in the form of a 'mouvement ethnopolitique'<sup>181</sup> organized by the Comité Fulfulde, the aim of which was 'la revalorisation de la culture peule traditionnelle' (1995: 466-71).<sup>182</sup>

The seminar was both a political event (with traditional forms of political mobilization such as slogans, resolutions, a final report, motions, messages, printed 'T' shirts etc.) as well as a festival (with 'traditional' singing and dancing and food etc.). The 'intellectuals' (the 'educated' (formal state) urban-based Fulani) were creating a Fulani tradition and ideology in Benin, as well as a sense of community and translating this message to the State. 'The educated Fulani are mediators between the state and the ethnic group' (Bierschenk 1995: 472-74, my translation).

The comparisons with the Street Parade with which we started this thesis are striking. The mobilization of the Fulani on the Streets of Accra that day was made possible, not only by the intellectuals, (spearheaded by the 'educated' literate officials of the association) but more importantly by the Ghanaian born Fulani, those arguably more 'distant' from the 'symbols' of Fulaniness (pastoralism, Fulfulde, *pulaaku*, 'fair skin', a 'home' recognized by state and neighbours as Fulani territory). The organizers and participants of the Accra parade had a greater stake to play in the legitimization of the Fulani as Ghanaian,

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<sup>181</sup> An ethnopolitical movement.

<sup>182</sup> The revalorisation of traditional Fulani culture.

as able to participate in national 'Ghanaian' parades on national holidays, as forming a community, 'meaningfully constructed by people through their symbolic prowess and resources' (Cohen 1985: 38).

In relation to symbols, cattle are a fundamental part of the Fulani symbolic repertoire as well as livelihood (for some). Their actual importance in the lives of individuals and families over time varies enormously. In Greater Accra cattle are a symbolic emblem in calls for Fulani unity, particularly by 'made-in-Ghana' urban dwellers. Among rural peoples, they are an integral part of everyday existence and impact on many aspects of daily life (diet, language, *pulaaku*, economy etc.). In the eyes of others Fulani and cattle cannot be divorced, they are synonymous.

In Greater Accra, the Fulani as an ethnic group are surviving and have done so for several generations.<sup>183</sup> Within Greater Accra, no process says more about the enduring potential of the Fulani as an ethnic group than the institution of marriage. The rates of inter-ethnic, inter-clan and inter-family marriage are ample evidence of this. Hajia Assana, whose father Alhaji Barry was one of the first Fulani settlers encountered in Chapter Three, said of her father that, 'all my father's children have married Fulani - except Hawa in Madina who has married a Kotokoli.' The significance of this statement is put into perspective when remembering that Alhaji Barry had forty-two children, all of whom were born in New Madina!

In Gongola State, Nigeria, VerEecke, considers *pulaaku* as '[symbolizing] the struggle to master the challenges and hardships the Fulbe encounter and...the security...they experience among their own people...in abiding by their cultural norms' (VerEecke 1991: 189). For her then, in Gongola State, *pulaaku* is a survival strategy. Recall the 'lack' of *pulaaku*, confidence and sense of security that Malik felt in comparison with his brother, the herdsman with 'more *pulaaku*'

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<sup>183</sup> By survival, I mean the endurance of the Fulani as an ethnic group as well as the survival of individual members in the face of precarious and ever changing conditions in Greater Accra, Ghana and West Africa as a whole.

(see Chapter Five). Perhaps for Yussuf also it is a survival strategy. *Pulaaku* is clearly a gendered and a situationally specific concept.

Migration clearly remains an important survival tactic for the Fulani, both within the West African sub-region and Ghana itself. The latter is exemplified by the gradual drift of agro-pastoral Fulani from rapidly urbanizing and expanding Greater Accra into the Volta and other regions with their animals. While the animals (and their caretakers) are being moved according to circumstance, the families themselves are staying put (see Chapter Three). Therefore in a way, moving and settling go hand in hand and are both reactions to changing conditions.

In a very different place and time Bovin (1990: 51), in her comparison of Wodaabe in Niger with Fulani in Burkina Faso, notes that in times of hardship (drought and famine in particular) there are 'two main ways of surviving'. The Wodaabe react by moving on and the Fulbe of Liptaako, by settling down.<sup>184</sup> This moving on, can and does take different forms. For example Wodaabe and Fulani migrate to the cities in the 'south' to beg and sell herbal medicines (Bovin 1990: 38).<sup>185</sup>

Many of those who 'followed their cow' to Ghana and who came to Ghana for other reasons (marriage, illness, visit etc.) have made Ghana their home, some temporarily, others more permanently. This has been the situation for generations. Ghana is clearly 'home' for many Fulani today, particularly for those born and raised here. Ironically, the state and peoples of Ghana (those who consider themselves to be indigenous) do not embrace Fulani as Ghanaians. While

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<sup>184</sup> 'Some Liptaako herders...choose long distance migration, and some went as far south as Togo and northern Ghana and Benin with the herds in order to survive on better pastures in the south. But the families did not follow. Only young men and middle aged men follow the herds. Old people, children and women stay at home and cultivate the soil' (Bovin 1990: 51).

<sup>185</sup> In the previous chapter we encountered the Wodaabe women who were selling herbal medicines in the streets of Accra.

accepting them as resident, they are considered to originate from beyond Ghana's borders.

Clearly some Fulani have several homes, and may move according to circumstance, or at least retain the option, in word and deed, to return elsewhere or move on if required.<sup>186</sup> A case in point is the story of Alhaji Diallo, (Chapter 3) who, now in his eighties, has spent most of his adult life living in Ghana. In 1963/64, Polly Hill<sup>187</sup> interviewed Alhaji Diallo. She wrote, 'He says he intends to retire to his homeland "one day", leaving his business to his son' (Hill 1964: 30). This clearly hasn't happened. Alhaji Diallo lives in New Madina to this day.

This situation is far from unique to the Fulani in Ghana. In Sierra Leone for example, in the Kissi district, Fulani are also considered 'strangers', by 'locals' and 'aliens' by the government (Bah 1983). They are regarded as strangers, despite their long residence (stretching back to 1700), the large size of the community and their contributions to the development of the area. The comparison with Ghana is evident.

Keeping one's options open, and remaining flexible, as far as one's 'home' is concerned would appear to be a very good survival strategy, in light of the precarious nature of West African politics. However the Ghanaian state, not for the first time, seems bent on distinguishing those for whom Ghana is a legitimate home, from those it perceives as 'aliens', hailing from elsewhere. Indeed the Government of Ghana has just recently embarked upon an exercise to 'register foreigners...to enable it to know their actual number'.<sup>188</sup> What the Government intends to do with this information, once it has compiled this register remains to

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<sup>186</sup> Bernardet (1989: 7) noted that in 1988, due to violent conflict in Ghana, an influx of Fulani crossed the border into Côte d'Ivoire. He stated that half of these Fulani were of Nigerian origin and that to speak of Ghanaian Fulani is an 'error'.

<sup>187</sup> 'A socio-economic report on cattle-ownership and Fulani herdsmen in the Ashaiman/Dodowa district of the Accra plains'

<sup>188</sup> This exercise was begun on Monday 8 March 1999.  
[Http://www.africanews.org/west/ghana/stories/19990308-feat1.html](http://www.africanews.org/west/ghana/stories/19990308-feat1.html)

be seen. However it is likely that many people, considered 'foreigners', by neighbours and the state, but who nonetheless consider themselves to be Ghanaian, will feel intimidated and insecure.<sup>189</sup> Although at this stage there is no indication that the present government's efforts to compile a register of 'foreigners' are anything but administrative, the underlying motives remain questionable.

As the 'guardian of national borders, the arbiter of citizenship, and the entity responsible for foreign policy' the state conflicts with the interests of transnational projects (Kearney 1995: 548).<sup>190</sup> What will happen to those individuals and families caught in the cross-fire whose very survival relies on trans-statal movements: those who feel they have 'no home like Ghana', but whom the Ghanaian state does not consider to be at home?

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<sup>189</sup> The history of resentment towards aliens in Ghana in particular and West Africa in general is both recent and recurring Eades (1975), Adomako-Sarfo (1974), Olajide (1985), Pellow and Chazan (1986).

<sup>190</sup> 'Transnational calls attention to the cultural and political projects of nation-states as they vie for hegemony in relations with other nation-states, with their citizens and "aliens"' (Kearney 1995: 548).

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **A note on field methods**

### **‘Sitting at the edge of the mat’**

When Ukubar returned to Saudi Arabia he wrote it down that one-day strangers would come amongst them who would be fond of cattle. They would be the Fulani. He said that they would be recognizable as Fulani because when they were welcomed, instead of sitting in the middle of the mat, (when invited to sit down), they would sit at the edge of the mat and gradually move towards the middle.

(Alhaji Diallo)<sup>191</sup>

This excerpt from a version of the Fulani myth of origin, is an appropriate metaphor for the way in which the research for this thesis was approached and data gathered. Fieldwork was conducted over eighteen months, between January 1996 and August 1997. The edge of the mat in this case was the peri-urban Fulani community situated in New Madina. One of three large well respected Fulani families, the Tal family, was the initial point of contact and much time was spent here. Over time, I was gradually introduced to other neighbouring families and ventured further afield to visit individuals and families in the urban centres as well as outwards towards the rural settlements.

The peri-urban settlement of New Madina provides an important link between the urban and rural communities. It serves as a point of welcome/contact to newly arrived visitors. This same function was extended to me. Thus, as

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<sup>191</sup> See myths of origin, Appendix IV.

confidence was gained in me and as I became a more familiar sight and my research became known to many, so was I able to venture inwards, away from the edge of the mat, into the centre.

'Sitting at the edge of the mat' is not only a fitting spatial analogy but is also a metaphor for my own behaviour and demeanour in the 'field'. It reflects the manner in which information gathering was approached and information sought and gathered. Much of the early period of fieldwork and data collection was spent in getting to know people and becoming known as well as recognized, gaining trust and building rapport. The issues of interest to me, of identity and migration, necessarily involved discussion of sensitive and personal issues (such as nationality and the official documents a person possessed). These questions could have potentially been misinterpreted and viewed as threatening, ultimately jeopardizing my whole data collection process.

Great time and care was taken in getting to know people and standing back (or rather sitting at the edge of the mat). It was not until my name, face and presence among Fulani in Greater Accra became very familiar over time and trust and friendships were established, that I could move away from the edge and into the centre, in order to address the questions at the heart of this thesis. Thus, the last five months of fieldwork proved to be the most intense period of data collection in which most of the stories of individual lives were collected.

## **'Mobile ethnography'**

The other, much less common mode of ethnographic research self-consciously embedded in a world system, now often associated with the wave of intellectual capital labelled postmodernism, moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. This mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically

by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation. It develops instead a strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects.

(Marcus 1995: 96)

Given the sensitive nature of the information sought and the wide variety of perspectives involved, as well as the highly dispersed nature of Fulani settlement in Greater Accra, the story that I tell is made up of many individual stories from numerous points of view (young and old, female and male, slave-born and noble), and different geographical locations. My very presence in the field mirrored this approach. I was mobile and moved around the Region of Greater Accra in order to visit, converse with and ultimately gain the trust and perspectives and stories of those involved. My fieldwork was thus 'multi-sited', and my ethnography 'mobile' (Marcus 1995: 96).

The Fulani residing in (or visiting) Greater Accra live in a multitude of dispersed settlements throughout the region. At an analytical level these locations can be divided into three distinct areas, urban, peri-urban (rural/urban fringe) and rural (bush). In the urban areas, there is no distinct Fulani quarter and in the rural, the Fulani are dispersed. New Madina is arguably the only distinct localized settlement where Fulani live in Greater Accra.

These three different types of settlement are intimately connected with the types of opportunities and livelihoods that individual Fulani in Greater Accra experience. However, residence in these locations is far from fixed and some individuals move freely and frequently between rural, peri-urban and urban on a daily basis. It is argued therefore that this 'mobile' approach is necessary given the mobile nature of the lives of the individuals with whom I was working:

The object of study is ultimately mobile and multiply situated, so any ethnography of such an object will have to have a comparative dimension that is integral to it, in the form of juxtapositions of



phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been) kept worlds apart. L )

(Marcus 1995: 102) .

### **Bricolage & collage**

A variety of methods have been used in this project to collect, store and analyse data.<sup>192</sup> The data gathered has been both qualitative and quantitative. Although the overwhelming bias was towards the former, the two approaches complement and inform each other. In spite of several decades of anthropological studies demonstrating the validity and richness of such a multi-method approach, these basic approaches (qualitative and quantitative) are still often viewed as fundamentally opposed by some social scientists. Supporters of the latter view the former as impressionistic and not objective and the latter view the former as abstract and remote from the object of study.

Qualitative methodologies emphasize the use of multiple techniques of data collection and analysis, in a bid to better grasp the multifaceted 'reality' of the situation on hand, / as much as possible from the point of view of the observed. 2/ The use of multiple methods simply allows a study to be researched from different perspectives in order to add depth and breadth. Thus as with this present study, a wide variety of approaches have been employed, including personal experience and introspection, first-hand observation and participation and various types of interviews. Questionnaires were administered, life histories and case studies were collected.

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<sup>192</sup> Bell 1993; Bernard 1998; Bryman & Cramer 1997; Caplan 1993; Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Devereux & Hoddinott 1992; Ellen 1984; Fetterman 1989; Giele & Elder 1998; Hammersley 1993; Holy 1987; Silverman 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Werner & Schoepfle 1987.

These complex interconnecting methods have been described as a 'bricolage'. The bricolage is a 'complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 3) and thus, the researcher employing these as a 'bricoleur'. As with any scientific approach to research, it is a very value laden one and from the outset it is very much the philosophy of this project that:

The bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting. The bricoleur knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value-free science.

(Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 3)

### **Collecting & telling stories<sup>193</sup>**

...researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied.

(Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 3)

I have a story to tell. A big story made up of many smaller individual ones. These individual stories are accounts of the lives of various individuals. These stories illustrated the varying spatial dimensions of Fulani life, associated with the search for livelihoods, marriage partners and means to socialize and train the young. Over two hundred life stories documenting residential, migration, educational, marital and childbearing histories were collected. Story tellers were selected in a purposeful manner in order to include a variety of interesting characteristics, to account for differences in sex, age, location and residence within Accra (urban, peri-urban and

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<sup>193</sup> For examples of the use of life-histories in research see: Abu-Lughod (1993); Bocquene (1986); Mack (1988); Ottenberg (1996); Romero et al. (1988); Schildkrout (1988); Yin (1984); Youngstedt (1988). See also Slim & Thompson (1993) *Listening for a change: Oral Testimony & Development*.

rural) and other differences' such as country of origin. Cases were used to document the singularity of individuals as well as to identify significant shared features.

The main unit of study is therefore the mobile individual. The individuals are not considered in isolation, for their lives and experiences are interconnected. Their present is bound up in the spatial and social context of Greater Accra, but many of them have memories and experiences which have been played out over a vast stretch of the African continent.

### **Speaking & listening**

Initially, the desire to spend time in one particular compound, (the Tal family compound), around and with its members was articulated as a desire to learn the language. Some basic grasp of the grammatical structure of the language and some vocabulary had been gained during a nine-month course studying Fulani language and culture at INALCO, Paris.<sup>194</sup> (An inherent problem of this course was the fact that Fulani dialects vary immensely and the course was focused on linguistics.) This objective gradually began to change, as it became obvious that there was a choice to be made.

I was working with people the majority of whom had an amazing variety of geographical, cultural and linguistic experience and all were now living in a multi-ethnic, complex linguistic situation. I thus had several languages in common with many of the members of the compound. Accordingly some people (the majority) spoke Twi, some (again the majority) spoke some form of English, and others French, as well as other Ghanaian and West African languages e.g. Ga, Ewe, Hausa, Zabarama etc. (to varying degrees of fluency). This was important because it became apparent that in the bid to build relationships with individuals and at the same time gather information and conduct interviews, the best way that

this could be achieved was through use of whatever language we best shared in common.

I argue that far from placing these informants in situations where they were expressing themselves in languages alien to them, I was conversing with them in languages that on a daily basis they find themselves switching between, depending on the contexts. The situation of the researcher also demands some explanation. I am fluent in English and Twi and able to communicate in French, and can speak and understand some Fulfulde. In addressing the issue of language in multi-sited ethnography Marcus states,

...if such ethnography is to flourish in arenas that anthropology has defined as emblematic interests, it will soon have to become as multilingual as it is multi-sited. In this sense, it conforms to (and often exceeds) the most exacting and substantive demands of traditional fieldwork.

(Marcus 1996: 101)

Thus, simply put, the dilemma was as follows, either build immediate, spontaneous relationships with people and start straight away to gather information, shifting languages contextually and, frequently (as the people themselves do), or take a slower approach, by ignoring the potential information gained from speaking other languages and only try and speak Fulfulde (when the people themselves can and do frequently change languages). The former path was taken, initially it was not a conscious decision, but when it became apparent that my Fulfulde skills were progressing slowly, but I was in fact switching languages as appropriate and building rapport and gaining information, I decided to continue in this manner.

Apart from its methodological and theoretical importance this 'dilemma' also led to the exploration of the theme of 'multi-lingualism' in relation to my central theme of 'identity'. There were instances however in which the person I

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<sup>194</sup> See Skinner & Pelletier (1979); Sow (1971); Taylor (1995).

wanted to address was not comfortable addressing me in one of the languages I spoke, or could not express themselves as well as they would have liked, if at all. In these instances I used the help of a research assistant as interpreter.

### Research Assistance

During the course of my research, I was fortunate enough to have the help of several young, literate Fulani men and women. I was able to call upon the assistance of four individuals in particular. Three young unmarried girls (all in their late teens and early twenties) and a young man of twenty-eight years of age. They were the son and daughters of two of the most well known and respected Fulani families in the whole of the Accra plains. The high status and standing of their various families undoubtedly opened up many avenues of inquiry to me, as well as gaining me the trust of many otherwise sceptical individuals. The help of these assistants included introducing me to potential storytellers and aiding in translation.

In terms of gaining access to other people especially older men it was a great advantage, if not a necessity, to have on occasion a male research assistant. Another important point was that his father, now deceased, had been a very important and well-known figure in the Fulani community and of Muslim society more generally in Accra. He had represented the Niger Fulani and had acted as their unofficial chief. Declaring that the research assistant was the son of the late Alhaji Tal undoubtedly opened up many doors, and allayed any suspicions some may have had as to who I was and the purpose of my mission. Eventually with their help I was allowed to venture to the centre of the mat and in the process my female assistants became my good friends.

## Interviews

A variety of interview techniques were used, including semi-structured (with checklists), informal and retrospective interviews among key informants, alone and in groups. These were tape recorded whenever possible. Interviews were conducted in private wherever possible, in order to preserve the quality of the recording, to cut down on background noise, as well as putting the person being interviewed at ease, that they were speaking to me privately, without an audience of inquisitive onlookers. This objective was not always easy to achieve, depending on the situation. Informal focus group discussions were initiated. On other occasions they spontaneously occurred (for instance while trying to interview someone about *pulaaku*, onlookers contributed and widened the discussion).

## Questionnaires

The quantitative approach complemented the qualitative. Several questionnaires were designed and small surveys carried out. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to store and analyse codeable and quantifiable sections of the life histories collected. A systematic checklist of questions was designed in order to gather detailed information on the life histories of the individuals in the sample. This covered aspects of the individuals' childhood and socialization experiences, parental and grandparental provenance, migration, marriage and work histories. Another questionnaire was designed to discover the range of languages people spoke, wrote and read. The latter two questions provided information on literacy. An attempt was also made to glean how well (in very general terms) people rated their own ability in each of the various languages they spoke. How and where they had learned the language was also of relevance, as well as with whom and in what contexts they spoke them.

An interview guide was designed to identify the various Fulani chiefs in the Accra, Madina and Ashaiman area, to find out where they currently lived, where they originated from and their occupations. More specifically the guide was designed to ascertain their spheres of influence, and their roles in the organization of the *suudu-baabas*.

### Daily Diary

A fieldwork diary was kept during the entire duration of the research. It served as a catalogue of events and included observations and personal opinions. Reminders of information that needed verifying and transcriptions of recorded interviews were also integrated into it.

### Technical Aids

A tape recorder was used as and when deemed appropriate. It was used to record interviews with individuals and groups, songs and performances by musicians. A camera was used constantly mainly with photographic film, but occasionally with slide film. Apart from being of use as a research tool, it was also an excellent way of repaying people for their kindness. A video recorder was used on several occasions.

## APPENDIX 11

### News clippings

#### Armed Fulanis invade Yendi

**A**RMED Fulani herdsmen from Niger and Burkina Faso have invaded the Yendi District for the past six months, allowing their cattle to graze on farms.

They intimidated farmers who dared to complain.

Mr Ibrahim Alabira, Member of Parliament for Mion, who disclosed this to the GNA at Yendi, said large acres of farms and the vegetation had been destroyed at

Sakpe, Worivi and Sambu.

He accused some chiefs in the area of collaborating with the herdsmen for their personal gains, while ignoring the concerns of their people.

Mr Alabira called on the Ministry of the Interior to assist the District Assembly to get rid of them to avert further degradation of the environment.

He expressed concern about security lapses at the country's borders that gave room for the herdsmen to exploit. -GNA

GHANAIAN TIMES 4/3/98



# NEWS

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## Headlines

### Fulani Herdsmen Invade Sissala

Wa, Ghana, March 27, -- Alien Fulani herdsmen believed to have come from Burkina Faso have invaded the south Sissala area of the Wa district with large herds of cattle destroying the vegetation and environment as well as threatening the lives of the people.

As a result large tracts of land in the area have been degraded and would need a longer period to rejuvenate, the locals said Friday. According to the chief of Kundungu, Kuoro Bakuli Bakube, who came to Wa report the activities of the herdsmen to the regional coordinating council, said water sources have also dried up while economic trees such as sheanut trees are being cut down by the herdsmen as fodder for their animals.

Kuore Bakube alleged that the Fulani herdsmen also indulge in anti-social acts like rape, thereby creating anxiety among women and girls who fear volunteering out to the bush for fire wood and vegetables. Chief Bakubie said at Kunyabin village, a boy who was out with his father's bullocks was threatened by the herdsmen and he abandoned the bullocks to them. It is however believed that some local chiefs and assemblymen use their position to settle the herdsmen in the area.

Meanwhile, the south Sissala union has appealed to chiefs in the area to take quick steps to ensure the removal of the herdsmen from the area. It warned that it would mobilize the youth against any chief who fails to heed to their appeal. It would be recalled that at a meeting with chiefs of the Wala traditional council, the Wa district chief executive, Alhaji Seidu Peleuo, warned them against the settlement of the alien Fulani herdsmen in the district.

## 1 reported dead in Zakayili clash

**A** clash between the police and some people at Zakayili village near Tamale at the week-end left one person dead and several others injured - one in a critical condition.

The dead was identified as Issah Abdulai.

According to an eyewitness, the clash occurred when the police tried to arrest people suspected of burning down houses belonging to the Fulani community.

He said after the police arrested one of the four suspects, they were confronted by the villagers with clubs, stones and other offensive weapons.

They smashed the windscreen of the police vehicle and forcibly released the suspect, then in handcuffs, forcing the police to fire warning shots.

The Tamale Municipal Police Commander, Mr. Isaac Offei, confirmed the incident, and said that the attack on the police was unprovoked.

He said when police reinforcement went back, the village was deserted, adding that later, the Tamale Municipal Chief Executive, Alhaji Baba Ibrahimah, brought a pair of handcuffs which, he said, he found on a tree at the village.

The Police Commander said on hearing that some people from the village had sent the injured to the hospital, the police went there to arrest them.

The police denied shooting indiscriminately or beating up the people at the hospital as was being alleged. **GNA**

# Police seek help to stem cattle rustling

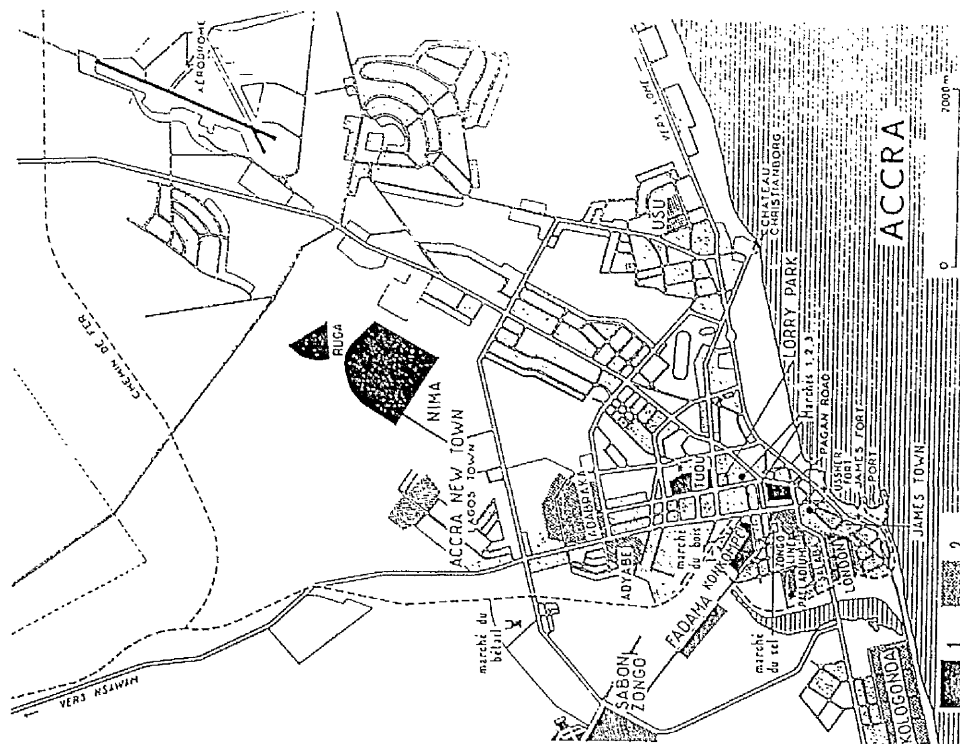
**T**HE Yendi Divisional Police Commander, Chief Superintendent John Aggrey, on Monday appealed to the people of the Nanumba District to assist the police in curbing cattle rustling in the area.

He deplored the tendency of people taking the law into their own hands by administering instant justice to suspected rustlers, saying, "this is a serious threat to security."

Mr. Aggrey's appeal followed the killing of an unidentified Fulani man believed to be a member of a cattle stealing gang that raided a kraal at Bandyin village near Bimbilla.

A Kokomba farmer, Wukarbu Yibiba, who allegedly shot and killed the man, is being held by the police for questioning.

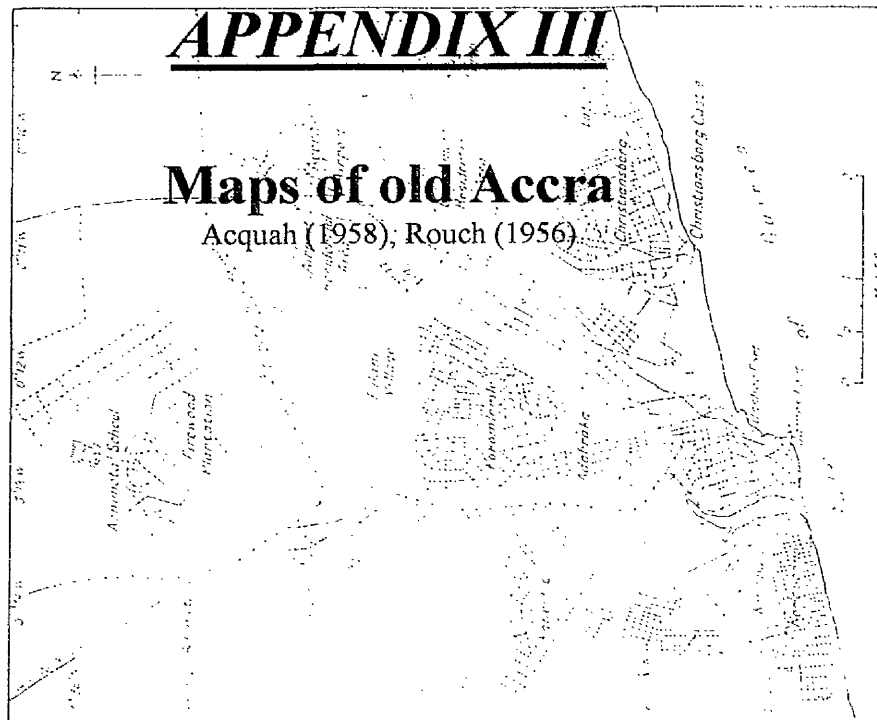
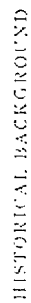
Mr. Aggrey said the killing had no ethnic undertones and he advised the people to report all crimes to the law enforcement agencies for action, instead of dealing with them in their own way.-GNA.



## APPENDIX III

## Maps of old Accra

Acquah (1958); Rouch (1956).



## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Myths of origin**

#### VERSION 1

'Now Fulani's in terms of history, there are many sources, but according to what we know from our grandfathers, the Fulani's first grandfather was an Arab. Some versions challenge this version. Some say we came for the purpose of spreading Islamic religion. The time when the prophet Mohammed left and when his second man in command became the head of Islam - Halif Oumarou - he sent that man to West Africa - to spread the religion. He came as a trader and as a preacher - he came to Guinea.

Later on, he married the daughter of one Chief, the Chief MalankoBe (Malinke) and he got two issues (children) from the woman. The senior boy was called Diallo. He is the father of all Fulani's called Diallo. The junior one was Barry, who became the father of all those called Barry in the Fulani community. Some say he had another (son) called Sidibe, who became the father of all Sidibe's.

All other ethnic groups within Fulani communities come out from these three men. By the time the Arab left, his wife married the slave to that Arab. They (the three boys) got a brother, [with] a different father. That boy is known as the father of all Jawambe. These are the Father's to Fulani's.' (Aliou Diallo Tal. Chairman of *Nassuru* Association)

#### VERSION 2

Another version of the tale was told to me by Alhaji Diallo: (Originally in Fulfulde)

An Arabian man called Ukubar\* went to Gede in Mali to convert the people there to Islam. There he married a Malinke woman and they had three children, one girl and two boys. In public, the children would not talk and acted as though they were dumb. The mother was told to observe her children when they weren't aware and to see what language they spoke in private.

One day the mother came across her children, her youngest child, the girl, was crying, and the eldest two were telling her to keep quiet, 'deju', 'deju'. They were speaking Fulfulde. Ukubar had seen it written that one day a people would come called the Fulani.

When Ukubar returned to Saudi Arabia he wrote it down that one day strangers would come amongst them who would be fond of cattle they would be the Fulani. He said that they would know who they were because when they were welcomed, instead of sitting in the middle of the mat, when welcomed to sit down, they would sit at the edge of the mat and gradually move towards the middle.

Some time later when Ukubar's sons were grown up, they decided to go to Saudi Arabia in search of their father, unbeknown to them however, their father had already died.

When they arrived and were offered a mat to sit upon, they sat down at the edge of the mat. Thus, the Arabians saw that the Fulani people had come amongst them. Ukubar had also written down that when the Fulani came amongst them, they should be given cattle so that they would be happy and have peace of mind. The Fulani men were happy and had nothing else to ask of from the Arabs. They isolated themselves from the Arabs and went to settle outside the community, raising their cattle.

\*(Ukubar is believed to be a disciple of the Prophet Mohammed)

### VERSION 3

Mallam Mahmoud a Nigerien Mallam resident in Madina told me this version of the tale. (in French)

Ukubar was sent from Saudi Arabia to convert people to Islam. He travelled with his slave. They travelled until they reached Fouta. (between present day Mali, Senegal and Guinea). They arrived at a village and Ukubar went to the King to recite the Koran saying that he would teach it to the king and his children. The King agreed. Ukubar lived behind the village with his slave. Everyday he would go to the village and teach the King and his children.

The King told Ukubar that he should choose one of his daughters to marry. Ukubar told the King that he should rather choose. Thus, The King gave one of his daughters to Ukubar, he took her off into the bush to live with him. They had three children. They were the first Fulani.

Ukubar heard that Usman Dan Fodio had started a war in Saudi Arabia, so he decided to go off in search of it to fight. Ukubar left his wife and children behind saying to his wife that if she were to hear of his death, she should marry his slave. Ukubar set off, he found the war in [present day) Libya and died there. Ukubar's wife heard of his death and married the slave. Their children were Jaawando.

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